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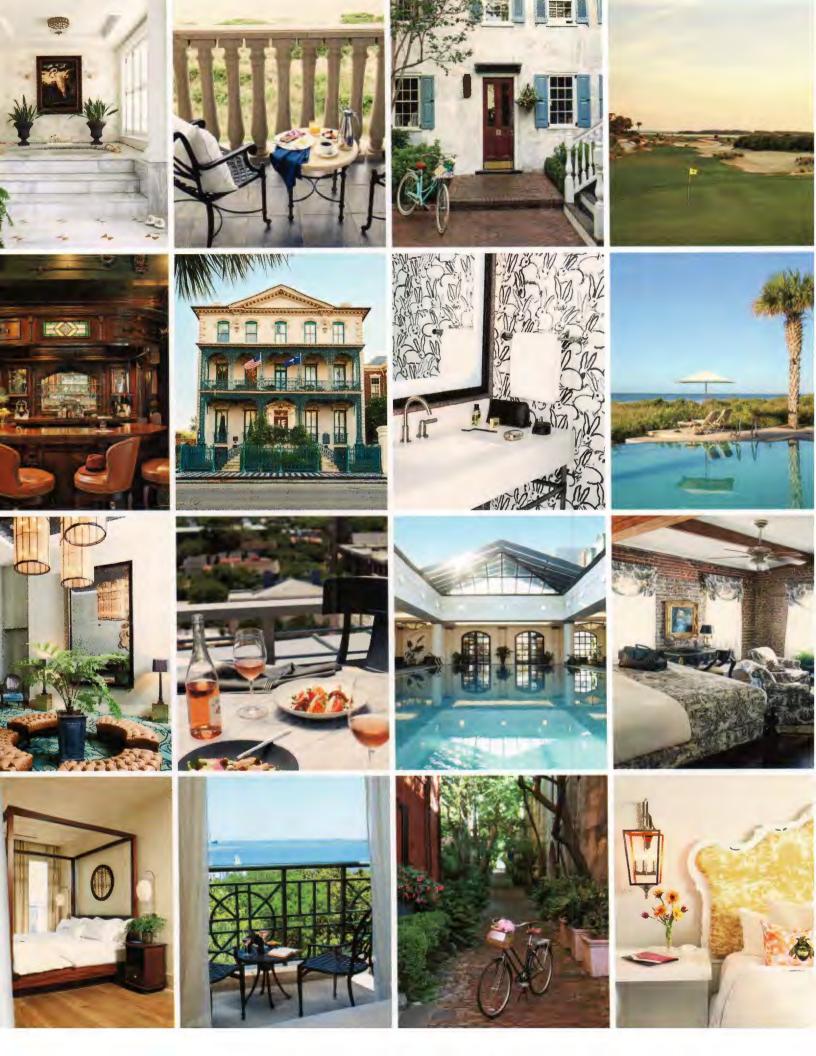












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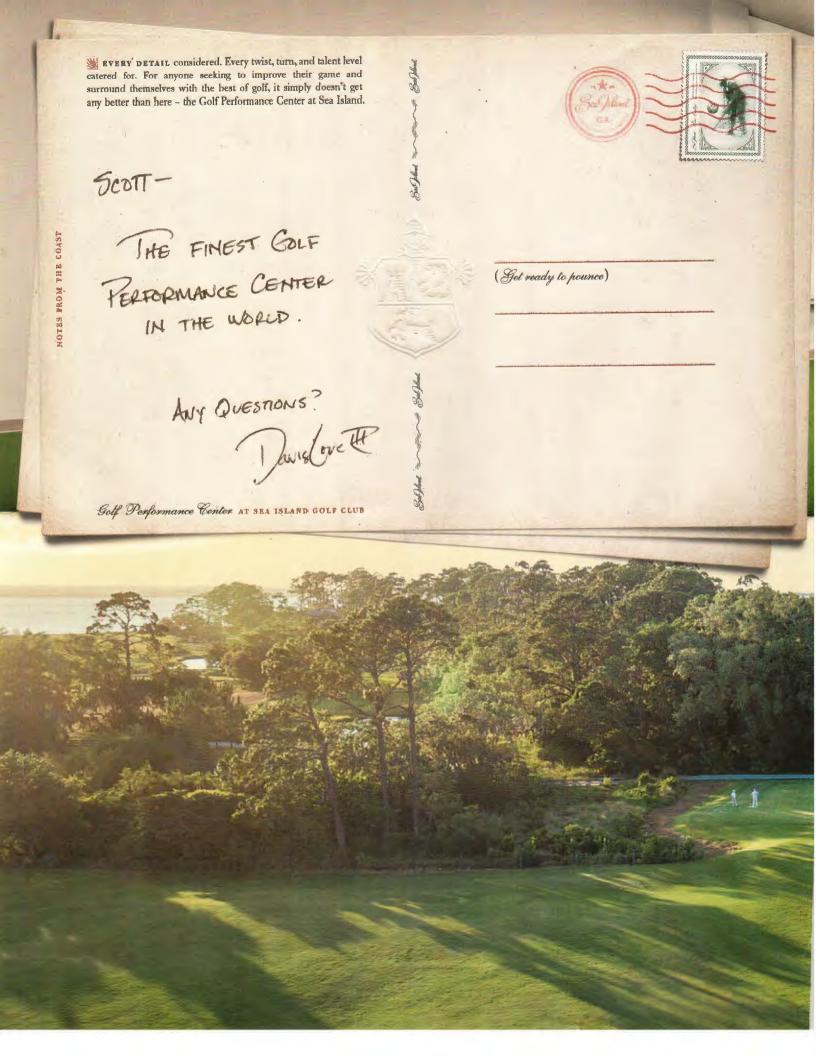
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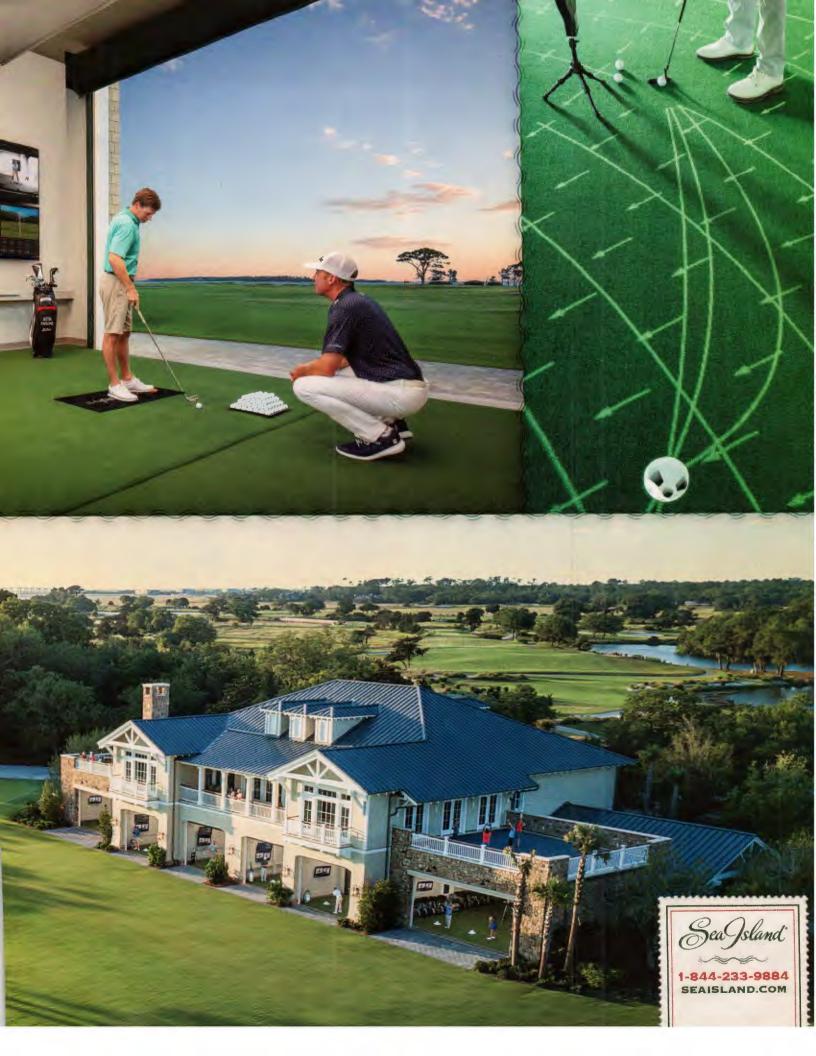
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CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

ADD THE QUEEN CITY TO YOUR WINTER FOODIE LIST

Mark your winter foodie bucket list: Charlotte, North Carolina, should be at the top. In a city where the culinary community is both close-knit and competitive, native and transplant, every meal is an exploration of the city's evolving identity. And the accolades have certainly been pouring in over the years. Food & Wine magazine even declared the 2018 restaurant scene in Charlotte as its "breakout year," and this year looks even better.

Both visitors and locals are eating up Charlotte's food and beverage evolution. From savory seafood at The Waterman to artisan tea at Not Just Coffee, the Queen City's culinary scene mixes the new with the old, Southern fried with more than a dash of international spice and local talent with a melting pot of transplants. Complement a satisfying meal with a spin around tree-lined neighborhood streets where you can discover gems like outfitter The Sporting Gent. Stirred together, you have a metropolitan identity that's exciting, authentic and most definitely delicious.

Whether it's a weekend getaway or week-long stay, mouthwatering dishes and drinks await in the Queen City.





SOUTHERN WOMEN

IN BUSINESS

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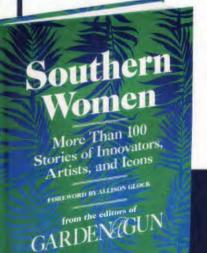
Raise a glass to Garden & Gun's newest title, Southern Women, a celebration of the iconic women whose strength and creativity have shaped the South. In honor of the book's release, G&G and Synovus host a series of events to recognize the female entrepreneurs and business leaders paving the way for generations to come. Join us for food, cocktails, and inspiring conversation with a few of the book's featured visionaries.

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27 | THE GARDEN & GUN CLUB Lunch and Conversation with G&G cofounder and CEO Rebecca Darwin and businesswoman and philanthropist Darla Moore

BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

THURSDAY, MARCH 19 | BOTTEGA RESTAURANT Lunch and Conversation with restaurateurs Vivian Howard and Pardis Stitt



TAMPA, FLORIDA

THURSDAY, APRIL 2 | OXFORD EXCHANGE
Cocktails and Conversation with designer Cristina Lynch
and entrepreneur Laura Vinroot Poole

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RES

DECEMBER 2019 / JANUARY 2020

114 Healing Notes

Singer, songwriter, Americana favorite, author, and mother, Allison Moorer brings the ghosts of a painful past to life with her new memoir and album, mesmerizing audiences and proving the healing power of storytelling

By Silas House

99

Florida Found

Rick Bragg's flashbacks of shell hunting and stone crabs, a time-traveling voyage down the storied St. Johns River, and more than two dozen hidden spots—from secluded island getaways to raucous dollar-bill bars—that keep the spirit of Old Florida alive

120

Tenth Annual Made in the South Awards

Dreamy cotton blankets, a head-turning camp knife, a Gullah Geechee spice mix built on generations of family tradition, and more—the winners of our annual contest cap off a decade of the best of Southern craftsmanship

138

Walnut Fever

Each fall, pickers across the South and beyond grab hats, gloves, and Nut Wizards and head outdoors on a tasty mission—collect all the black walnuts they can find

By Bill Heavey

DEPARTMENTS

DECEMBER 2019 / JANUARY 2020 *

TALK OF THE SOUTH

31 Interview

The next Food Network star

34

Conservation

Rhett Turner's keen lens

36

Books

Tracking the Florida panther

38

Music

High-powered soul

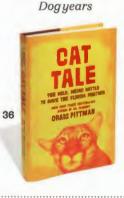
Ask G&G

Georgia's penal past and animal calls for kids

Style

The new Nudie

46 Southern Focus



IN EVERY ISSUE

18 Editor's Letter 24 Contributors

26 Letters





31

GOOD HUNTING

73

Southern Style

The ultimate holiday gift guide

COLUMNS

Good Dog

A wild puppy brings out his owners' inner children

By Mark Powell

The High & the Low I dream of donkeys

By Julia Reed

DUE SOUTH

145

Adventures

Exploring Mexico's new wine country

156

Our Kind of Place

A hallowed shotgun hideaway

163

The Southern Agenda

Goings-on in the South

186

End of the Line

Roy Blount Jr. meets Florida Man

ON THE COVER

Lounging on the Santa Fe River in northern Florida. Photograph by Gately Williams. Hat by Gigi Burris.

JUBILEE

51 Drinks: Viva El Presidente / 54 Anatomy of a Classic: A Southern take on a Hanukkah staple / 56 Tastemaker: The one and only Nathalie Dupree /58 Fork in the Road: John T. Edge finds his home away from home in D.C. /62 What's in Season: One sweet squash / 65 Anniversary: An oral history of the world's best airport restaurant





STRAIGHT FROM THE SWAMPS OF FLORIDA



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Christian C. Bryant

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Associate Publisher, Advertising Ginger Sutton / Associate Publisher, Marketing Colleen Glenn Associate Director, Integrated Marketing Clay Maxwell SeniorIntegrated Marketing Manager Conley Crimmins / Integrated Marketing Coordinator Isabelle Martin

Senior Events Manager Ellie Gumenick/Events Coordinator Lindsey Fuller
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Designers Caroline O'Neill, Chris Boyette / Junior Designer Emily Dreyer / Copywriter Abigail Tierney
Events Intern Madeleine Fennell / Marketing Intern Dotaie Stevens / Design Intern Mallory Thomas Assistant to the Publisher Lucy Ralph 843-805-4275

Atlanta: Southeast Account Director Jana Robinson 678-399-3302

Chicago/Detroit: Midwest Account Directors Paul Mallon 248-909-5430, Ken Stubblefield 313-670-0553

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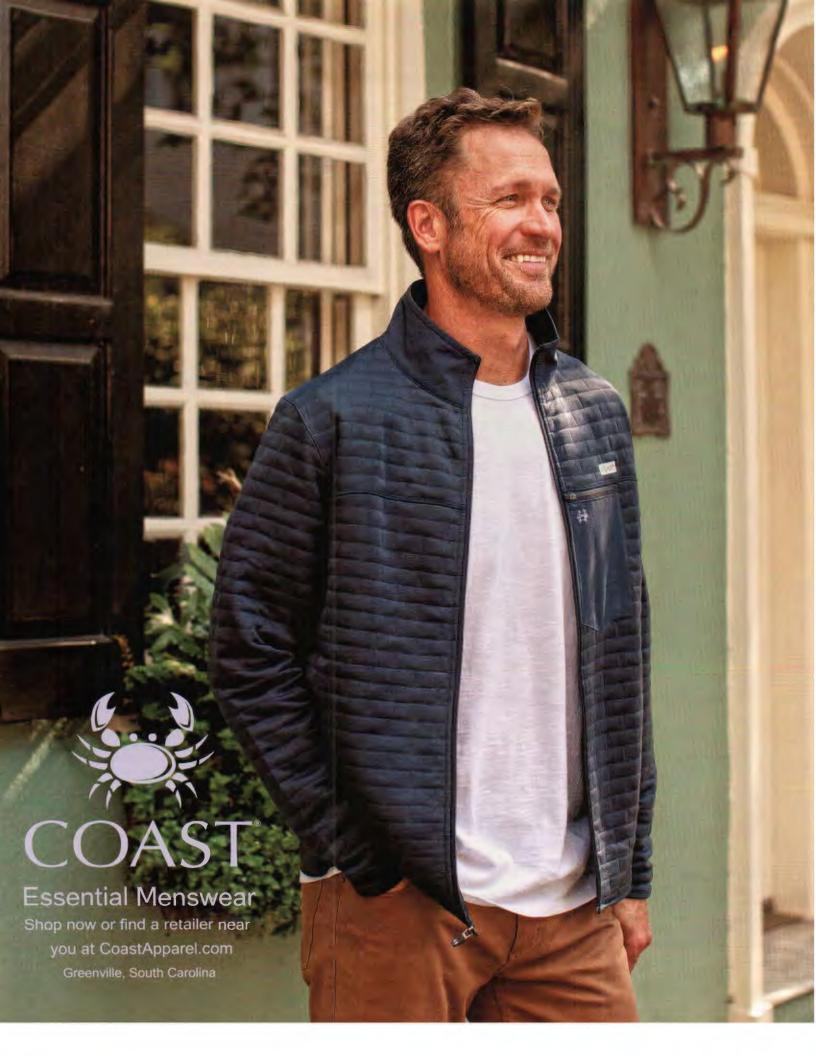
Members

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Heavy Hitter

A VINTAGE SLEDGEHAMMER GOES FROM RUST HEAP TO WALL HANGER



ne of my favorite places in the South is an uninhabited barrier island off the coast of South Carolina where I've left tracks in the sand since I was a kid. In grade school I lost my first bull redfish in the surf there (and broke down in tears on my knees as the waves washed around me), and I encountered my first rattlesnake that

wasn't behind glass, coiled perfectly between clumps of sea oats on a brisk November morning. These days I love watching my kids' enthusiasm as we beach the jon boat and they run wild on the vast and open sand flat, hunting for lettered olive shells and collecting feathers left behind by the resident pelicans and terns. DiBenedetto with the finished product, courtesy of Richardson Axeworks. Below left: The sledgehammer's head before restoration.

Recently, we nearly stubbed our toes on a hunk of rusted metal resting in the sandy clay of a tidal pool. After turning it over in our hands for a few minutes, we realized it must have been the head of an old sledgehammer. Knowing my penchant for things with a past, my wife, Jenny, wasn't surprised when I slid the heavy find into the bottom of the shell bag. "Don't worry," Isaid, "I've got a plan."

That plan involved Chris Richardson of Richardson Axeworks, a 2018 Made in the South Awards honoree who created a business out of his passion for restoring old tools, from axes to cleavers, to functioning works of art. While Richardson has instilled new life into some pretty rough pieces, this project was unique, he says, due to an untold number of years of saltwater corrosion and deep pitting. We agreed that the end result should accentuate the years of use-and disuse-the sevenpound sledgehammer had seen. Richardson started with a vinegar bath and a steel brush, then used a wire wheel before moving to countless rounds of sanding. The process can sometimes take weeks, until, he says, "I just get that feeling in my gut that it's done." From there he worked on a suitable hickory handle with a drawknife and sander before finishing it off with a scorch to bring out the wood's grain.

For Richardson, who since the awards has restored tools for folks in twenty-nine states, every project is special. "When I get to see the finished work, there is joy and relief and thankfulness that I get to do

this," he says. You'll find that same sentiment among this year's crop of Made in the South Awards winners and runners-up (p. 120), whether it's Pamela D. Jones Mack and her seafood spice mix, inspired by her Gullah Geechee roots, or Ethan Summers and his indigo-dved jackets, which riff on the traditional Japanese clothes his mother made for him when he was a boy. They all prove that creativity and craftsmanship have never been more vibrant in the South-and it's an honor to shine a light on their work.

DAVID DIBENEDETTO

Senior Vice President & Editor in Chief

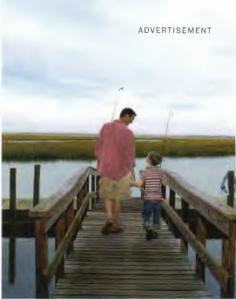
Ten Years of Made in the South

Honoring our first Hall of Famer

We asked you to choose your favorite Made in the South honoree of the past ten vears, and the votes are in. The first inductee into the Made in the South Awards Hall of Fame is Jerry Talton Decovs in Stella, North Carolina, which won the Outdoors category in 2016. Talton carves his decoys in the traditional North Carolina Core Sound style, influenced by the region's working rigs of the past. Since Talton's win, he's hardly had time to put down his bowl adze and spoon gouge, with orders coming from across the country and even internationally. To see Talton and his work in person, check out the Core Sound Decoy Festival (December 7-8), on Harkers Island, North Carolina.







AMELIA ISLAND:

BEYOND THE BEACH

Take in Amelia Island's thirteen miles of sand and salt water, but venture beyond to discover the heart of this vibrant barrier island community

Lowcountry beauty, Key West attitude, and Old Florida charm meet on the streets and waterways of Amelia Island, Located on the Sunshine State's northeast coast, the former fishing village is home to an abundance of sandy real estate, inviting sunseekers to stake their beach umbrellas, unfurl their towels, and stay awhile. But if your toes never leave the Appalachian quartz sand (no matter how beautiful a coastal stretch), you'll miss out on the pleasures of wandering the historic downtown streets lined with lovingly preserved Victorian homes; eating your way through the island's robust food scene (bring on the fresh seafood!); indulging in a little R&R at a surprisingly diverse lineup of accommodations; and exploring Amelia's protected salt marshes, maritime forests, and deep-blue waterways.

To start, pick a spot and establish your vacation HQ. With more than twenty places to choose from—quaint bed-and-breakfasts, historic inns, comfortable hotels, and two world-class resorts (the **Omni Amelia Island Plantation Resort** and **The Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island**)—you can't go wrong with your selection. Traveling with a crew? Home rentals of all sizes are available to meet the needs of your group. And for those travelers looking to fully immerse themselves in the landscape, there are two campgrounds at **Fort Clinch State Park**, located on the north end of the island. Pitch your tent near the beach or set up camp under an ancient canopy of live oaks. The peaceful 1,400-acre preserve surrounding the park's nineteenth-century masonry fort,

which stands sentinel over the entrance to **St. Mary's River**, is one of the island's three state parks.

But you haven't really experienced Amelia Island unless you get out on the water. (Boogie boarding doesn't count.) Meet up with the naturalists at **Kayak Amelia** for a three-hour guided paddle that's both educational and invigorating. Or book space on a guided tour with **Amelia River Cruises**. Come December and January, keep watch for the North Atlantic right whales that migrate to these waters to give birth. Travelers seeking more of an adrenaline rush can schedule a backwater **CraigCat Catamaran tour**—the compact boats reach speeds up to seventy-five miles per hour. Feeling especially adventurous? Sign on with the high-flying folks at **Skydive Amelia Island** for a bird's-eye view of the area waterways.

Keep your energy up and head downtown. The picturesque roadways splintering off of **Centre Street**, downtown's main thoroughfare, are home to a vibrant network of local restaurants and independent shops. The area is blissfully chain-free. At **Timoti's Seafood Shak**, the Poynter family serves baskets of shrimp (fried, grilled, or blackened) alongside your choice of french fries, hush puppies, or slaw. A few blocks away, snag a courtyard seat and tuck into the catch of the day at **Joe's 2nd Street Bistro**, a historic district favorite since 1998. There are more than ninety other dining establishments to choose from, including The Ritz-Carlton's acclaimed AAA five-diamond restaurant **Salt**, so come hungry. Walk off your meal where? Back at the beach, of course.







To start planning your Amelia Island vacation, visit AmeliaIsland.com

EVER SO SLIGHTLY ENchanting

Maybe it's the gentle crashing of the Atlantic Ocean, beckoning you to let go.

Maybe it's the laughter of the ones you're with, urging you to join the fun.

Whatever it is, there's something different about Amelia Island.

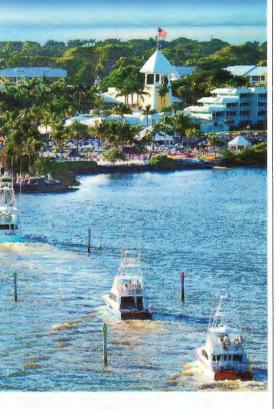
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GARDENANDGUN.COM PHOTO CONTEST Meet the Top Dog of 2019 Thanks to our readers for the more than 17,000 entries (and one million-plus

WHAT'S

Thanks to our readers for the more than 17,000 entries (and one million-plus votes!) in our Good Dog Photo Contest, in partnership with Gunner Kennels and The Farmer's Dog. Now go to gardenandgun.com/gooddog2019 to see the readers' choice winners, editors' favorites, and dozens of other very good dogs—including the overall winner, Komet, an English springer spaniel from Atlanta.



■ To see the Made in the South Awards winners, turn to page 120.



Erin and Ben Napier

CRAFTS

Thanks to Erin and Ben Napier, Laurel, Mississippi, is enjoying a boom of sorts. There, the couple founded Laurel Mercantile Co., on Front Street, to design and sell heirloom-quality goods such as kitchenware, comforters, and coffee mugs; and Scotsman Co., where Ben handcrafts one-of-a-kind home furnishings. In 2017, their HGTV series, Home Town, premiered, giving the Napiers the chance to restore historic houses throughout Laurel. "Southerners take the modest things they have and make them beautiful," Erin says.

Dara Caponigro

HOME

"A human touch in a home is so important, especially in our technological society," says Dara Caponigro, the creative director at F. Schumacher & Co. Before overseeing the company's inventive fabrics and wallpaper, she worked as editor in chief of Veranda, a founding editor of Domino, design and decoration director at Elle Decor, and decorating director at House Beautiful. Naturally, she has filled her New York home with antiques and handmade goods. "Handcrafted items bringso much personality and depth," she says. "It's about soul."

Rob Samuels

DRINK

For eight generations, Rob Samuels's family has been distilling Maker's Mark bourbon in Loretto, Kentucky. And although he has acted as Maker's chief operating officer since 2010, over the years Samuels has been involved in nearly every aspect of the company, including the hand dipping of each bottle in its signature red wax, a tradition his grandmother Margie (a Kentucky Bourbon Hall of Famer) started. "Drinks are such an important part of the culture of this region," he says. "It's about what's in the bottle as well as the story it tells."

Carla Hall

FOOD

"Southern food is magical," says the chef Carla Hall. "When I taste something, it's like I know the person who made it without ever having met them." Born in Nashville, Hall rose to culinary stardom on television-including as a contestant on Top Chef and as a cohost of the Emmy-winning talk show The Chewbut keeps her heart rooted in Southern dishes. Her three cookbooks venerate classic comfort foods such as okra, johnnycakes, and biscuits. "Eating this food is the same thing I feel when Igo down South," Hall says. "I'm at home."

Laura Vinroot Poole

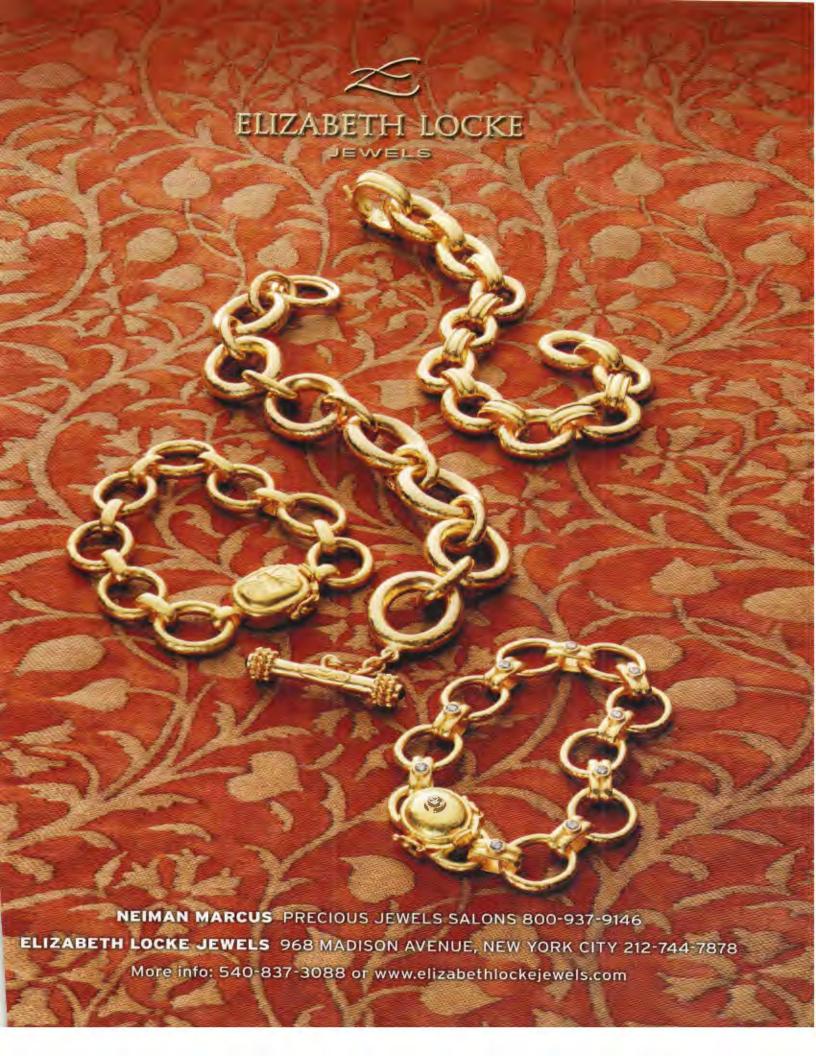
STYLE

"In the South, we've always been innovators." says Laura Vinroot Poole. That's certainly true in her case. Over the past two decades. Poole has established herself as one of the region's leading tastemakers, founding Capitol, a luxury clothing boutique in Charlotte that touts emerging designers as well as venerable brands that create eye-catching women's designs, and then spawning two sibling stores in the Queen City: Tabor and Poole Shop. Last spring, she spread westward, opening Capitol's second location in Santa Monica, California.

T. Edward **Nickens**

OUTDOORS

Whether he's fly fishing for rainbow trout in East Tennessee, flushing bobwhites in Georgia's Red Hills, or relaxing at home in Raleigh, Garden & Gun contributing editor T. Edward Nickens is always on the lookout for innovative outdoor goods that tell a story. "I'm intrigued when a maker goes a few extra steps to connect their work to the Southern experience or landscape in some way," he says. This marks the ninth time that Nickens, whose books include The Total Outdoorsman Manual, has judged the Made in the South Awards' Outdoors category.



"Could you prepare us for the Good Dog story by giving, say, a one-to-five-tearjerk emoji rating?"

BATTLE OVER THE EVERGLADES
Thank you for "Wild Hope" (October/
November 2019). The problems of pollution, fertilizer runoff, loss of flora and fauna, and their effect on Florida are very real, and time is of the essence. Kudos for raising the issue and providing impetus to the stakeholders—Floridians, environmentalists, fishermen, tourists, Big Sugar, farmers, Corps of Engineers, and politicians—to restore the Everglades.

Tim Saewert Placida, Florida

I was extremely disappointed in "Wild Hope" unfairly targeting sugarcane farmers, who have done more for Everglades restoration than any other private entity. Since 1994, Florida's sugarcane farmers have achieved a 56 percent average reduction in phosphorus, more than double the 25 percent required by law. Farmers have spent nearly \$450 million on special taxes, and for research and infrastructure to implement cleanup measures. The author didn't note that sugarcane is one of the best filters for Lake Okeechobee's water. With a perennial crop, you get three to four annual harvests and therefore don't have to disturb the soil. Sugarcane stores huge amounts of carbon. G&G missed an opportunity to highlight the ingenuity, sustainability, and economic success happening on sugarcane farms.

Ryan Weston CEO, Florida Sugar Cane League

The editors respond: Garden & Gun stands by the reporting in "Wild Hope."

ASKED AND ANSWERED

Thanks for the advice about mixing up dinner party guest lists (Ask *G&G*, October/November 2019). When I was the only single woman on our block, I was asked to the Tupperware parties, but when it came to dinner, the invitation never came. I joined my local Rotary Club, which met for dinner, and made lifelong friends—couples and singles.

Jane Sinclair Greer, South Carolina

Thank you for your perfect response to the question about Oklahoma in Ask G&G. My ancestors lived in the Old Nation and were marched on the Trail of Tears. Many of these same people or their children fought in the Battle of New Orleans and for Texas independence.

Jeanne Bornefeld Fort Wayne, Indiana

Bless your hearts. Guy Martin's history lesson was nice, but the fact is, Oklahoma is not Southern. Nor is Texas. Do us all a favor and keep my favorite magazine on the right side of the Mississippi.

Clay Zeigler Jacksonville, Florida

GONE TO THE DOGS

Geez, could you prepare us for Good Dog by giving, say, a one-to-five-tear-jerk emoji rating? Or a warning: "If you're over fifty, don't read this while drinking." Anyhoo, thanks for messing me up with another great dog story this month.

Dale Smith Fort Worth, Texas



Social Chatter

GARDENANDGUN.COM AND BEYOND

WE ASKED.

What's your go-to bourbon, and what's your splurge?

In a Talk of the South newsletter, we called for bourbon opinions. Top picks: Maker's Mark, Woodford Reserve, Buffalo Trace, Blanton's, Pappy, Angel's Envy, and a few surprises.

Old Charter. "Everybody who is anybody" drank that when I was growing up in the Mississippi Delta. Splurge: Angel's Envy. Marilyn Brookes

I drink Woodford Reserve every day, including special occasions. A slice of heaven in a busy world. Scott Griffin

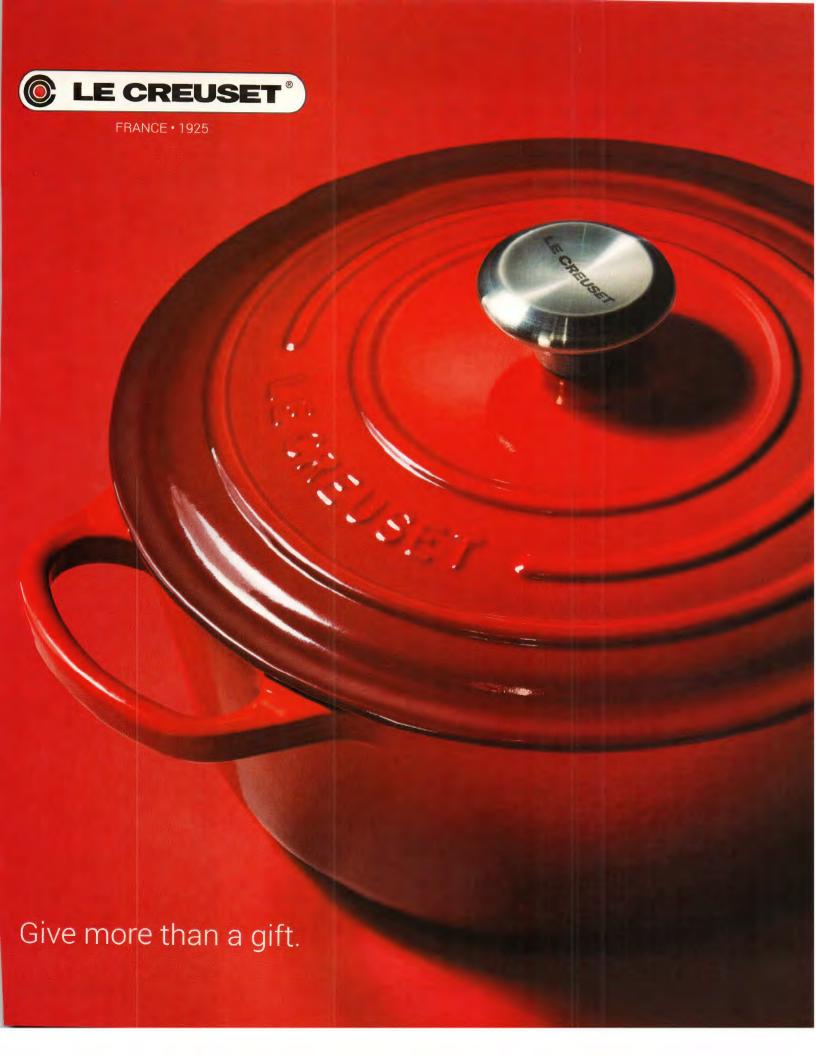
Shop the middle shelf. Not the bottom's plastic bottles, not the top. For all times: Old Forester. **John Scull**

Everyday: Rebel Yell. Special: Maker's Mark julep. John Zebelean III

Once the drinking lamp is lit, I pour Buffalo Trace. After the second, I go to Elijah Craig. Steve Layton

Blade and Bow. Jason Brow

I serve George Diokel whiskey to guests. I have been gifted with Pappy and am happy to share a sip if someone is close enough. Dianne Neal







THE BEACHES OF FORT MYERS & SANIBEL: ON THE WATER

From barrier island beaches to serene paddling trails. Southwest Florida promises saltwater adventures at every turn

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soundtrack, Learn more at

IslandHopperFest.com

While the mainland is a coastal oasis in its own right, Southwest Florida is skirted by barrier islands, making the glamorized notion of island hopping reality for those craving a short expedition beyond the shore. Just ask the locals—amid the hundreds of destinations, each has its own distinct feel, so you're free to drop anchor wherever

suits your fancy. While nearby locales promise miles of exploration and plentiful lodging for an extended stay, a journey through the smaller islands of Captiva, Cayo Costa, Useppa, Cabbage Key, and others rewards boaters with secluded stretches of white sand and the blissful peace and quiet only found off the beaten path.

No matter where you find paradise, prepare to treasure hunt: From conchs to coquinas, a bounty of one-of-akind souvenirs awaits. Thanks to Caribbean currents, thousands of smooth, unblemished seashells wash ashore on local beaches in a single day, making for some of the best shelling in the world. Leisurely shell seekers can tote a bucket to the shores of Sanibel

or Captiva Island, while those more adventurous might try their luck on the barrier islands' more remote beaches, which abound in untouched pearly banks. And if you don't have a vessel at your disposal, don't fret; countless local excursions offer a ticket to ride, be it an ecotour, a fishing charter, or a golden-hour cruise.

For a closer encounter with the region's wild beauty,

consider grabbing a paddle. With near perfect conditions all year long, coastal Fort Myers and Sanibel serve as one of the country's foremost paddling destinations, and if you're partial to stand-up paddleboard or kayak, the setting provides miles of serenity and a brush with the native wildlife. An afternoon on the Gulf of Mexico

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> For many, however, no Florida experience is complete until you've gone fishing, and whether a lazy cast or a deep-water expedition is more your speed, the Southwest coast is widely considered an angler's paradise. En route to the community of Matlacha, fishermen will want to stop at the the Fishingest Bridge in the World, where hundreds of folks are known to linger and drop a line. Sportfishing options

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n April 2015, Kardea Brown left behind her job in social services for a life cooking in front of the camera. She'd recently impressed Food Network executives after a boyfriend signed her up to audition for a pilot, but the suits wanted her to hone her cooking skills. So the South Carolina native and longtime Atlanta resident returned to the South from New Jersey to begin the New Gullah Supper Club, centering events around the food she grew up eating at her grandmother's house on Wadmalaw Island. Food Network kept in touch, booking her to spar with chefs on shows such as Beat Bobby Flay and tapping her to host Cupcake Championship. Then, this past summer, Delicious Miss Brown debuted, allowing her to introduce the dishes of her Gullah

upbringing to the nation. Ahead of season two, which begins in early 2020, Brown reflects on the leap of faith that led to her own show.

How did the New Gullah Supper Club dining series get started?

When I came up with the idea, I was literally broke. I sold everything I had, moved back down South, and had to figure out a way to get my foot in the food industry. On my train ride-because I couldn't even afford a plane ticket at that point-to Charleston, I was just sitting there talking to God and the universe. I said, "I like to travel. I like to cook. What if I just do some type of traveling dinner party?" But what could set me apart? Well, the food that I cook is different. You can't find it everywhere unless you come to Charleston to eat it, so why not take Charleston to other places? I said, "I'm going to go on the road, and I'm going to share my culture with people."

You often bring a Gullah singer or storyteller with you to these events.

I'm big on visualization. The idea was to transport people to Charleston, and I wanted them to feel like they were sitting on a porch with someone's grandmother or listening to a soulful song at a juke joint.

What makes the Sea Islands so special to you?

Spending my summers on Wadmalaw Island, where my grandmother is from-I didn't realize how precious it was until I became an adult. My grandmother grew up in the time when it was actually frowned upon to speak the Gullah dialect, or to talk with the Gullah tongue, because it was not considered proper English. We preserved as much of our culture as possible. The language, the people, the land, the landscape—where else can you find that in America? It's really near and dear to my heart to be able to film in my hometown and to show the world what I grew up seeing.

When you prepare the food of your region on the show, you seem to beam with pride. Everybody thinks of Southern food, soul food, as heavy staples, but your recipes are light and fresh.

A lot of our dishes are big one-pot dishes that can feed a family like my grandmother's—she grew up with fourteen brothers and sisters. A lot of our foods are based on what is grown on the land and what we caught in the sea. I think the Gullah people laid the foundation for Southern cooking. Before farm-to-table was a fad, it was what Gullah people did, so I wanted to show the world that African American people don't just fry chicken and eat collard greens swimming in meat. It's very intentional on my part, to show a different part of the South.

You really cut up when you're around your family on the show. Were you like that growing up?

I am definitely a goofball. The funny thing is in high school, they have senior superlatives, so I was voted "most likely to be heard in the hallway," and I was voted "class clown." As a Southern little girl growing up, that was the exact opposite of what my grandmother taught me: A lady should be seen, never heard. [Laughs.] That just went out the window. I'm a big kid. I like to joke around. I think laughter is the cure to every ailment, any disease.

Your grandmother appears on the show. What does she think of your work?

My grandmother is a very practical woman. She grew up in the era when you had to make something of yourself through education, so when I told her that I was giving up my career in the social services sector, she said, "You have to be crazy." Recently, when I got the news that the show had gotten picked up, she said, "I watched you, and how serious you were about your craft." She said, "I'm really proud of you. I mean, words can't explain how proud I am of you."

She also taught you how to cook.

I learned the basics of cooking from my grandmother, but my mother was always the entertainer. She loved having her friends over for dinner. She always had big lavish birthday parties where she did all of the cooking, so I think that's where I got the idea of cooking for entertainment, and cooking for friends and family.

What can we expect in the second season?

Season one was the introduction to me and my world. Season two, you get to know my family. I always thought that this would be my personal diary in a sense. I can't wait for viewers to see my growth, not only as a cook or a chef but as a person, because this really is a journey. G



"I think the Gullah people laid the foundation for Southern cooking. Before farm-to-table was a fad, it was what Gullah people did"



Brown, once voted "class clown" in high school, plays around outside Wadmalaw's Cherry Point Seafood.



TALKOF THE SOUTH

CONSERVATION

Life, Camera, Action

DOCUMENTARIAN RHETT TURNER BUILDS AN ECOLOGICAL LEGACY ON FILM

By Patricia Murphy

hett Turner will go to almost any lengths

to tell a good story-in this case, about whooping cranes. "The days started at four in the morning," he says of the shooting schedule for Journey of the Whooping Crane, his recent documentary about North America's tallest birds and their return from near extinction. "They do

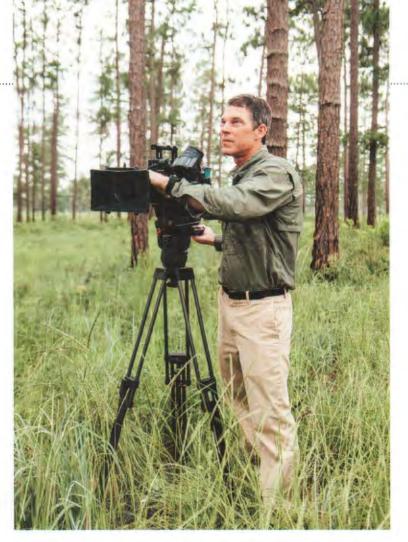
their best movement at first light and in the evenings, so you have to start early."

While enduring predawn wake-up calls, Turner and his longtime production partner, Greg Pope, spent two years traveling to seven locations-from the Northwest Territories of Canada through Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, and Florida-to capture the cranes' twentyfive-hundred-mile annual migration. The filmmakers slept overnight in bird blinds, shot from motorboats, rigged drones with high-definition cameras, and generally did anything necessary to capture the resilience of the unique birds, as well as the enormous efforts under way to protect them and grow their numbers.

"I want people to take away from the film how beautiful the bird is and how much humans have done to help bring this bird back from the brink of extinction," Turner says. After their number shrank to about fifteen in the 1940s, the whooping crane population has rebounded to almost 850 today. "But we need to be vigilant, and we need to pass the care of these animals on to the next generation."

At fifty-three, Turner knows what it means to be "the next generation," as one of the five children of Ted Turner, the founder of CNN and an avid outdoors man and conservationist. Growing up in Atlanta and, later, rural South Carolina on the family estate, Rhett had a life as a Turner that meant sailing, hunting, fishing, and anything else that kept him and his siblings outside, often on the water. "Dad instilled in us from a very young age how important the landscape is," Turner says, "to keep it natural and to take care of it."

After getting hands-on experience editing video at CNN's Tokyo bureau and earning his bachelor's of fine arts in photography from the Rhode Island School of Design, Turner began to infuse that commitment into his films. Many document the efforts required to bring



some of the world's most endangered species and resources back to health for the future, often with a focus on the South (and most are available to stream).

"I've done a lot of traveling all over the world, but to be able to do something in the Southeast, where I grew up, gives me the ability to focus on the backyard," he says. "And the backyard is very pretty, very dramatic, and gives the opportunity to do some very good work." That work also includes Secrets of the Longleaf Pine, which chronicles the battle to protect the ecologically critical longleaf forests that once covered ninety million acres, from Texas to Virginia, but have dwindled to just 5 percent of their original footprint. And Turner's latest film, Georgia from the Air, offers an expansive aerial tour of the state shot entirely with drone-mounted cameras. Audiences get a bird's-eye view of barely there towns, mountain mornings, Friday-night lights, Atlanta's skyscraping towers, sunrise beaches, and yes, longleaf pines.

"Rhett has a genuine passion for the conservation of nature, and that is expressed through his films," says Dr. George Archibald, the cofounder of the International Crane Foundation, which worked with Turner and Pope as they filmed. "He's made a huge impact."

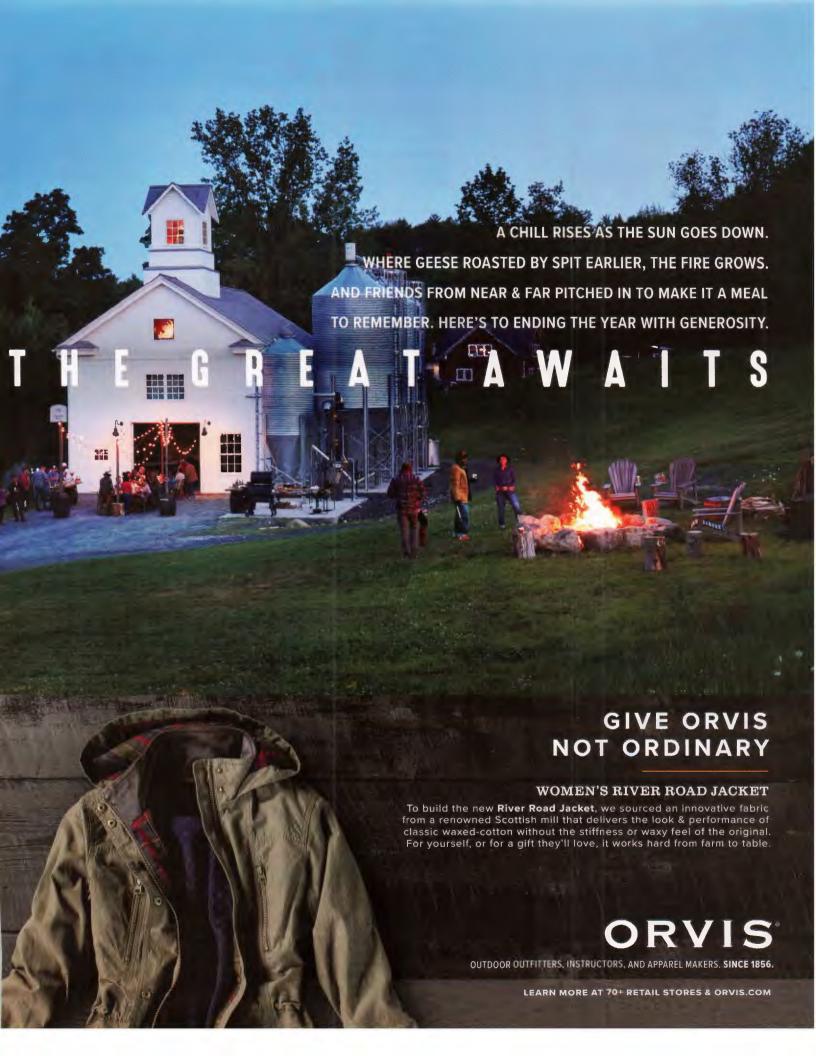
Turner predicts he won't be the last to carry the torch. "My son has been raised in the outdoors," he says. "My nieces and nephews, too, have been raised as stewards of the environment." Call them the next next generation, ready to extend the family legacy.



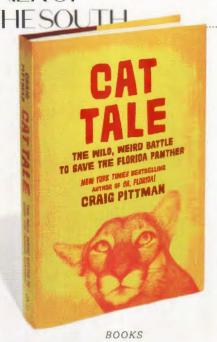
"Dad instilled in us from a very young age how important the landscape is," Turner says of his father, Ted. "to keep it natural and to take care of it"



Filmmaker Rhett Turner on his family's Nonami auail plantation, outside of Albany, Georgia.







Rally Cat

THE COMPELLING SAGA OF THE FLORIDA PANTHER'S COMEBACK

By Jonathan Miles

hances are, you've never seen Florida's official state animal in the wild-not even you rural Floridians. Florida panthers are stealthy creatures, despite their size, and do most of their prowling from dusk to dawn. More important, they're profoundly scarce. The state's best population estimates range from 120 to 230 panthers.

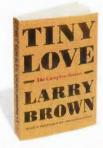
Twenty-five years ago, however, those sighting chances were close to nil, and the odds were looking strong that, within a decade or so, no one would ever again see a Florida panther in the wild, because there simply wouldn't be any. Only a handful remained back then: twenty by one mid-1990s estimate, six by another, both numbers absurdly dire. The Florida panther's cousins had long since been wiped out in other Eastern states. Only the human-resistant ferocity of Florida's interior-"nothing down here," as Jack Kerouac wrote, "but scorpions, lizards, vast spiders, mosquitoes, vast cockroaches & thorns in the grass"-had cushioned the panther from a similar fate. But the onrush of development was ending that cushion, paving the wayliterally-for the panther's end in the wild.

Craig Pittman's Cat Tale: The Wild, Weird Battle to Save the Florida Panther tells the story of how that didn't happen. Environmental story lines that don't end in gloom are their own kind of endangered species these days, which is just one of the pleasantly oddball aspects of Cat Tale. Pittman, a longtime Tampa Bay Times reporter, has written a ticktock account of how aband of scientists mounted a desperate rescue operation to pull the Florida panther back from almost certain extinction. It's a punchy, riveting story-despite spanning decades and despite many of the pivotal struggles playing out on the bureaucratic level-that rouses and uplifts (for the dogged work of its central cast, and for the fragile success they achieved) while also infuriating and dismaying (for the man-made obstacles they faced, and for the degree of that fragility).

Scientists tend to make for dry copy, but this is Florida, where nothing is ever fully dry. So we have Roy Mc-Bride, a West Texas hunter for hire whose wolf-hunting skills were the inspiration for Cormac McCarthy's The Crossing. McBride gave up killing cougars for sheep ranchers in order to track and tag them for scientists, and he became instrumental to Florida's effort to save its panthers—a defector to the cause of conservation. But we also have David Maehr, a seemingly gung ho wildlife biologist who, as Pittman painstakingly documents, cut corners on his research and then used the shoddy results for a lucrative sideline "aiding builders and developers and mining companies that wanted to run a steamroller over state and federal regulatory agencies": another kind of defector.

As with everything Florida, the deeper you go, the stranger it all gets. The panthers faced an array of existential threats: habitat loss; pollution; cars; and sometimes, from spooked or vindictive Floridians, bullets and arrows. But inbreeding, as one scientist discovered, might've been the most urgent threat, and addressing that proved key to the panthers' comeback. The scientists' "Hail Mary pass," as Pittman characterizes it, was to import and release Texas cougars to freshen up the gene pool. This controversial "outbreeding" gambit succeeded, but as panther numbers increased, so too did nonchalance about-and sometimes opposition to-preserving their habitat. Hence another grave threat: greed. At one point-I think it was when a federal bureaucrat overrode biologists' objections to a development by decreeing "Florida will be developed," or maybe when opponents of panther relocation coined the idea that "extinction is God's plan"-Iimagined a panther mirroring the thoughts of a character in a Lauren Groff story: "Of all the places in the world, she belongs in Florida. How dispiriting to learn this of herself."

Yet big cats are more or less extinct in every other state east of the Mississippi; only Florida has them, because only Florida devoted itself to saving them. And suitably, Pittman closes Cat Tale on an optimistic note. But caution is warranted. To quote Jimmy Buffett: "If you take one look behind the shine / it doesn't always gleam." Of the state's maybe two hundred panthers, more than a dozen have been flattened by cars so far this year. In August, state officials released trail-cam footage showing panthers with a mysterious affliction hobbling their ability to walk. The heroic effort to save the panther, thrillingly chronicled here, deserves an equally heroic commitment to ensuring its future. G



Odeto Larry Brown

A Mississippi voice shines in this short-story collection

Larry Brown had been a firefighter, a plumber, and a truck driver by age twenty-nine, when as a father of three in Oxford, Mississippi, he began devoting his hours to writing fiction. He collected a stack of rejection letters until Easyriders magazine published his piece involving a dusty motorcycle, a rattlesnake, and a weed-sniffing sheriff. That tale opens Tiny Love (Algonquin), the complete collection of Brown's darkly comic short stories starring smart and salty workaday Southerners. In the book's foreword, Garden & Gun book reviewer, Jonathan Miles shares a moving tribute to his friend Brown, who went on to author nine books. and who died in his sleep at age fifty-three. Now counted among the titans of modern Southern storytellers, Brown lived a life that proclaimed the power of writing your own dream.-CJLotz

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Dynamic Soul

DEVON GILFILLIAN BRINGS A SOUND ALL HIS OWN ON HIS INSPIRING DEBUT

By Matt Hendrickson

uring a recent visit to Los Angeles, Devon Gilfillian had a little time to kill before he was due in the studio. So his manager arranged a last-minute songwriting session at the home of Jonas Myrin, a Swedish artist best known for his work in the Christian music world. He soon arrived at Myrin's white-walled Hollywood mansion, but the session stalled. "We were trying to write something with an upbeat dance tempo, and it wasn't working," Gilfillian says. "Jonas is like a therapist, so we

ended up just talking about life for four hours." The twenty-nine-year-old had ample reason to reflect. In 2018, the van carrying him, his band, and his manager was struck head-on by a drunk driver on a curvy road outside Athens, Georgia. Miraculously, everyone escaped without major injuries. But it left Gilfillian shaken, and Myrin pushed him to confront those

feelings. The result is "Stranger," a dreamy, gospeltinged number that serves as the benediction to the lush, expansive soul of his debut album, Black Hole Rainbow. "It's about a person who comes into your life to keep you safe, whether that be an angel or something else," Gilfillian says of the song. He asked his father, Nelson-who moonlights as a wedding singer in Gilfillian's native Philadelphia-to sing backup on the track. "He was emotional when I sent him the lyrics," Gilfillian recalls. "But there was such joy in creating with my dad because I had never done that."

All good wedding singers need a thick song catalogue, lest they irk a couple who want to hear "Brown Eyed Girl" and "Brick House." The senior Gilfillian's

chops have certainly rubbed off on his son. Growing up on a steady diet of Marvin Gaye and Curtis Mayfield, he started playing guitar at fourteen when his father, as he describes it, "slapped me upside the head with Jimi Hendrix." After graduating from Pennsylvania's West Chester University with a degree in psychology, Gilfillian relocated to Nashville in 2013, eventually meeting his band members while playing gigs around town. The buzz worked its way through the East Nashville clubs to the staid compounds on Music Row, and for the past two years, Gilfillian has been the go-to opener for acts across the musical spectrum, from Brothers Osborne to Mavis Staples to Trombone Shorty.

Those eclectic experiences shine through on Black Hole Rainbow, which blends old-school soul, funk, bluesy guitar, and a few other twists. Using vintage gear, Gilfillian and producer Shawn Everett (Alabama Shakes, Kacey Musgraves) recorded instrumental versions of each song on the album to analog tape. Everett then had the material pressed onto vinyl and created digital files of the vinyl recordings, which he and Gilfillian could then fiddle around with. If you listen closely, you can hear the vinyl's crackle and pop. "We were sampling ourselves," Gilfillian says, laughing. "But it was worth it. I wanted to use every sound imaginable to dig the old soul out of the ground and send it to Mars."

The space travel yields a wash of psychedelic soul with hazy, layered vocals and hypnotic rhythms. Gilfillian is equally deft at peeling off blues licks in the swirling "Full Disclosure," crooning sweetly on the slow iam "Lonely," and grooving to the mesmerizing percussion of "Get Out and Get It," inspired by the Afrobeat sounds he heard during a visit to South Africa.

There's a charming earnestness to Gilfillian. He speaks of wanting to play in front of every type of music fan and welcoming all comers with open arms and a judgment-free vibe, sounding like something of a millennial hippie. "I'll take that," he says with a chuckle. "I don't care if you're young or old, black or white, brown, yellow, or orange. I'm pushing the sound forward and coming to play for you." G

Delta Great

Honoring the pianist and songwriter Mose Allison



Various Artists IF YOU'RE GOING TO THE CITY: A TRIBUTE TO MOSE ALLISON

The late jazz pianist and Mississippi Delta native Mose Allison once said. "In the South, I'm considered an advanced bebop type. In New York, I'm considered a country blues-folk type. Actually, I don't think I'm either. Maybe I'm a little of both." Allison's distinctive mix of styles combined with his wry, sardonic lyrics influenced a large swath of contemporary artists, many of whom appear on the new album If You're Going to the City: A Tribute to Mose Allison. Contributions come from. among others. Bonnie Raitt, Elvis Costello. Loudon Wainwright III, Chrissie Hynde, and blues legend Taj Mahal, who provides a gleeful rendition of the signature Allison tune "Your Mind Is on Vacation,"-M.H.

Singer, songwriter, and guitarist Devon Gilfillian, photographed at the Moon River Music Festival in Chattanooga.



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ASK G&G

From Jail to Georgia

SECOND CHANCES, ANIMAL CALLS, AND BARLOW KNIVES By Guy Martin





Eighteenth-century Georgia was really just King George's penal colony, right?

Georgia wasn't penal in the strict sense, like Devil's Island in French Guiana. But as conceived by its founder James Oglethorpe and his trustees in London, Georgia was expressly built on the theory of work release. One of Oglethorpe's selling points to King George II for the initial grant was that manning up the colony would, also, lighten the overcrowding in His Majesty's prisons of what Oglethorpe termed the "worthy" poor. Ergo: lt's fair to say that scores of recently released habitués of the king's house of corrections were among the colonists. Now, before our discussion gets drowned out by snickering from putative aristocrats who might think their lovingly tended family trees in states other than Georgia have escaped the jail-time taint, let's note that George's original grant in 1732 included great swaths of Alabama and Mississippi out through the Delta and beyond. In fact, emptying jails made for excellent colonial business-the British Caribbean, New Zealand, Australia, and the Rai's India became places of the second chance. Teasing our brethren of the thirteenth colony about their jailbird roots remains the best kind of Southern sport, but down at the core, as Americans,

every immigrant to the promised land comes from one sort of jail or another.

Worried about the kids' manners this year. Is there any reason not to use animal calls to wrench your children's attention from their phones and tablets? Gone are the days of my grandmother Vashti's mellifluous Christmas dinner bell. The war against your children's devices turning them into lumps on a log (or worse) is an unending one. Happily, I don't think there's any evidence that nature's soundtrack has a deleterious effect. But whistles and clucks you might lovingly use on your dogs and horses carry a nuanced command vocabulary that's notoriously hard to scale down into the house, especially with company present. If you want to give it a whirl, exercise care in your choice of species. Dog, horse, and mule signals seem fine, and I could see an argument for using a turkey or a duck call. but, again, in a house, a duck call is a bleating thing, and a turkey call's narrative of a breeding hen might not bethe metaphoryou want for getting the kids to come be nice to Aunt Mabel, who's come up from Mobile. A keening hog call probably has the best chance of slicing through a Minecraft session, but, fun as that might be to try, it seems like a no-no. Swine, right? Despite their intelligence and similarity to us in medical testing, correlating anything about pigs to anybody, at mealtimes no less, is dicey. Calling your people to the trough can be done more gently. Why not attack the problem at the source, and, like theater managers the world over, forbid devices from gatherings?

What is a barlow knife?

The industrial dialogue between England and the United States is a tangled familial one, no facet of it more so than that embodied by this popular pocketknife born in the late seventeenth century in the steel-making town of Sheffield. The historical consensus seems to have landed on a specific Sheffield cutler, Obadiah Barlow, as the ingenious architect, about 1670. Obadiah's grandson John came to the firm in the 1740s, as England's factories were firing up to supply the new American colonists. The barlow's enduring design is not in dispute: A teardrop handle, skinnier at the pivot and fatter at the back end, fit the tool to the hand. The signature long barlow bolster at the pivot effectively wrapped the tang and the frame of the knife in steel at what had been a folding knife's weakest point. Wooden scales cut the cost. Washington allegedly carried a barlow, though this may be grouped in the apocrypha with the houses he slept in while on the run from the British. Be that as it may, America's demand for the knife fast outstripped any appetite for it in England, which is how Samuel Clemens wound up putting barlows in the hands of Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer. The knife's message is ultrademocratic: From presidents to plowmen, all are welcome. The barlow was an everyday carry for everyman, and still is. G



TALKOF THESOUTH

STYLE

Rhinestone Cowboy

NASHVILLE'S NEW FAVORITE TAILOR, JERRY LEE ATWOOD, PICKS UP THE NUDIE SUIT THREAD

By Robert Annis

t's five days until the MTV Video Music Awards, and Jerry Lee Atwood's small Union Western tailor studio buzzes with activity.

Atwood created Lil Nas X's Western suit for his groundbreaking "Old Town Road" video, and three weeks before the awards show, the country rapper commissioned a new ensemble for the event. So Atwood has assembled a group of friends and loved ones to help out with the hurried haberdashery.

Pieces of the deconstructed suit litter the workspace. Atwood sits at one of the vintage Singer sewing machines in his Indianapolis studio, carefully attaching embroidery to a sleeve. Just a few feet away, one friend painstakingly hand presses one of more than four thousand individual rhinestones into the red fabric, while another sews the pants. Self-described "folk graffiti artist" Erin Hüber, Atwood's girlfriend, designed the jacket's special lining, featuring a lotus flower above wild horses, to evoke the feeling Lil Nas X requested.

"I probably miss out on some jobs not being in the thick of it all in Nashville or Los Angeles," Atwood says, but living four hours north of Music City hasn't stopped him from becoming the go-to tailor for its hottest acts. The Highwomen supergroup (Brandi Carlile, Maren Morris, Amanda Shires, and Natalie Hemby) all wore Union Western originals on their album cover, and modern-day troubadour Joshua Hedley did, too. Foo Fighters guitarist Chris Shiflett





Atwood (below left) added Florida motifs such as pythons (left) and panthers (below) to singer-songwriter and Naples native Joshua Hedley's suit.

has commissioned a suit, as have a slew of country and Americana stars such as

He might be pop culture's most popular new tailor now, but it took Atwood almost two decades to become an overnight sensation. At the beginning of that journey, he worked as a barista, doing simple embroidery as a hobby. When a frequent customer set a copy of the book Hillbilly Hollywood down on the counter, the trajectory of Atwood's life suddenly changed. The volume examines, among other things, the work of Nudie Cohn, who revolutionized country-music fashion in the mid-twentieth century. Nudie suits became industry status symbols, with El-

vis Presley, Porter Wagoner, and virtually every other big-time artist packing their closets with a rainbow collection of ensembles. (Johnny Cash's were all in black, of course.)

"My dad was a huge country-music fan," Atwood says, "and I remember seeing the artists wearing those beautiful outfits on so many album covers. I thought it'd be cool to make a Western shirt for myself one day." So he taught himself how to sew through books, working at a local theater company to hone his tailoring skills. Soon after he made his first shirt, he began crafting them for friends, then customers. When he received his first commission for a full suit, "I saw the potential for an actual career," Atwood says, "I realized this is what I wanted to do with my life."

During a brief revival of the Nudie brand several years ago, Atwood even embroidered about a dozen pieces that would bear the iconic label, but he largely





"When I first got into this, I thought Western wear had died with Nudie. I never imagined it would have this pop-culture resurgence"



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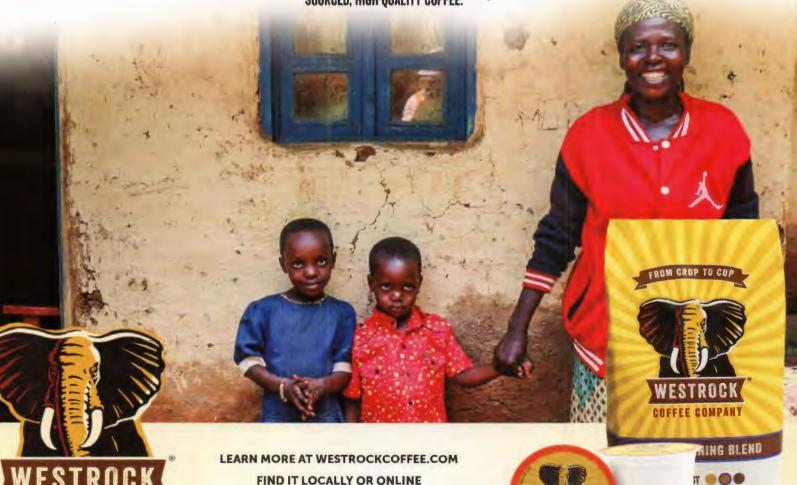
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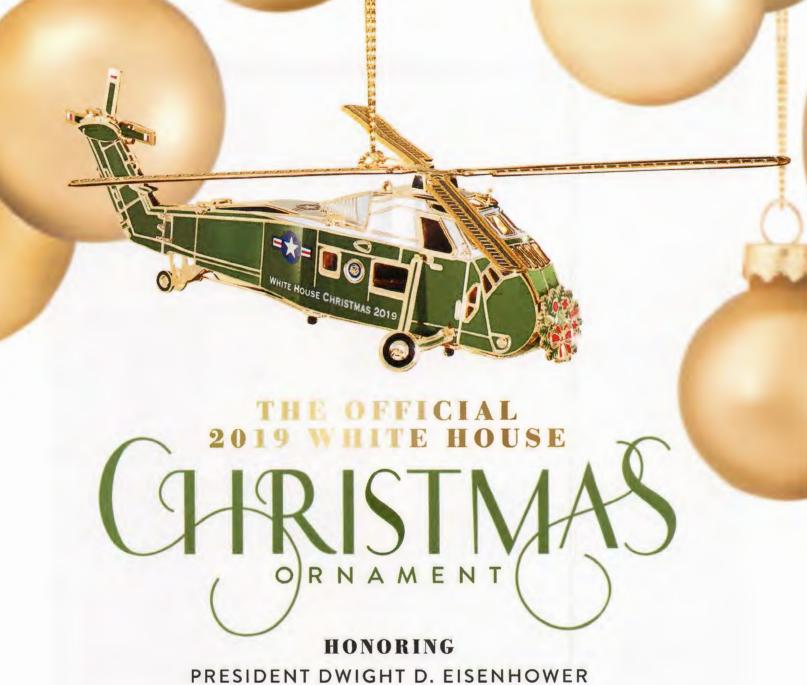
struck out on his own. Hollywood stylists spotted him on Instagram, which led to his creating a custom suit for the pop star Post Malone, a now-frequent client. A mention in *Vogue* and a surreal Halloween where kids dressing up as Malone did so in homemade re-creations of Atwood's suit followed.

The real deal takes Atwood as long as 120 hours to create. Although he interacts primarily with industry stylists, he prefers to collaborate directly with the musicians themselves on the concept. After sketching a design and getting it approved, Atwood cuts out pieces of the outfit, and then uses a light table and a special handcranked sewing machine to embroider, say, dice, slot machines, and gold coins for Lane's "Jackpot" song suit, or Florida panthers and herons for Hedley's. Atwood spangled one of his favorites, the spaceinspired suit he created for the Americana star Robert Ellis, with stylized rockets and astronauts. He says Ellis gave him just a vague outline of what he wanted, but afterward, they were both over the moon with the results.

"Each suit tells a story," Atwood says.
"The client gives me some concepts and motifs, and then it's up to me to make all of those elements blend together cohesively. Luckily, most artists respect that creative process and trust I'll make something awe-some for them."

That gamble paid off for Lane. She met Atwood through a mutual friend, and soon after, he was taking her measurements. She received the suit before a careerdefining Conan performance in 2017, and likens it today to "a royal garment." As Lane recalls, "There was no time for error, and he made none. His color choices are exciting and completely spot-on, which is even more remarkable when you learn he's color-blind"-a fact that hasn't slowed Atwood. When Robert Ellis played at a local music club, the designer admits he teared up a bit seeing his creation worn onstage. As his designs continue to win acclaim, those kinds of moments still feel surreal.

"When I first got into this, I thought Western wear had died with Nudie," Atwood says. "Ineverimagined it would have this pop-culture resurgence. I'm proud to be part of that long lineage. If I can't be a musician, this might be the next best thing. I like to think I'm making my own mark in music history."



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SOUTHER FOCL





Mount Pleasant, South Carolina

Photographs by Vincent J. Musi

From left: Smokey; Lilly and Bella; and Tellington, all in 2018. Pet portraiture has become all the rage—but what happens when a National Geographic pro accustomed to photographing tigers and elephants puts away his passport to snap labradoodles instead? The Year of the Dogs, a new book by Vincent J. Musi, answers that question with more than a hundred richly rendered images of spaniels, retrievers, bulldogs, and others, the posing pups infused with nobility (and often humor) with the pop of Musi's flash. Musi dreamed up the project to stick closer to his Lowcountry home before Hunter, his teenage son with his wife and fellow photographer, Callie Shell, left the nest. Over the course of 2017 and 2018, the family worked together, Shell acting as "dog whisperer" during the hours-long shoots in Musi's Unleashed Studio, originally set up in the back of a pet food store, and Hunter helping edit the whimsical captions, first for their three-hundred-thousand-plus fans on Instagram (@vincentjmusi), and then for the book. "For me, it was a chance to make these animals heroic," Musi says, "and romanticize them in a way l probably couldn't get away with at National Geographic."

G



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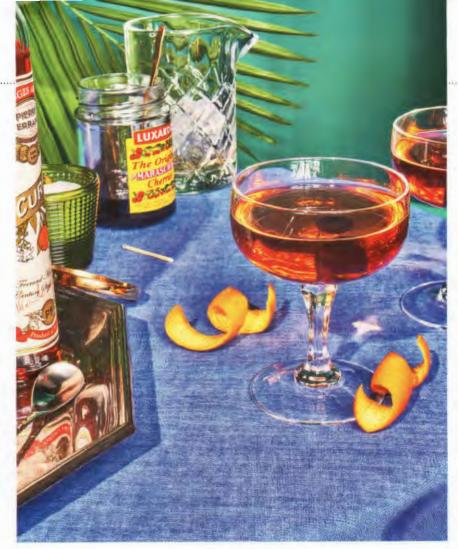
JUBILEE.

A CELEBRATION OF SOUTHERN FOOD AND DRINK

> Presidential Pour

GET TO KNOW AN OVERLOOKED CUBAN CLASSIC

By Wayne Curtis





El Presidente is a rum drink for those who don't care for limes. You may dislike the little green orbs because you have digestive issues. Or perhaps you have a serious personality flaw-I mean, who doesn't like limes? Or maybe you just believe that limes are for summer, best reserved for daiquiris and mojitos. That last argument is debatable, but defensible.

In any case, El Presidente is less daiquiri and more Manhattan, less summer and more winter. "It's the only elegant, spirit-forward Cuban cocktail," says Julio Cabrera, a Cuba native and proprietor of Cafe La Trova in Miami's Little Havana. The drink is on his menu, and the restaurant is where I became reacquainted with it earlier this year. "It's one of my favorite cocktails," Cabrera told me. "That and the Hemingway daiguiri, depending on time of year and time of day." Cabrera, it should be noted, holds no animosity toward limes.

I first sipped an El Presidente fifteen years ago, in Havana, at a sidewalk café across from a vendor selling postcards of Che Guevara. It was revelatory. Rum, it seemed, had suddenly grown up. Instead of wearing a backward baseball cap and lurching disconcertingly at a beach party, here was rum in a top hat dancing on my tabletop with the grace of Fred Astaire. "It is the aristocrat of cocktails," wrote the impeccably named Basil Woon in his impeccably titled 1928 book, When It's Cocktail Time in Cuba.

The drink is said to have first been concocted in Cuba around 1913, and was named in honor of President Mario García Menocal. It consisted of equal parts rum and vermouth, with a dash of grenadine. It was notable enough that when President Calvin Coolidge visited Havana in 1928, Cuba's president offered him one at the presidential palace. This was obviously a moment of peak presidentiality. However, it was also the moment of Prohibition in the United States, in an era when presidents believed public actions conveyed private meaning. Coolidge declined the drink.

Later, the addition of curação liqueur gave the cocktail a subtle citrus note, and by the 1930s, it had become a mainstay at El Floridita, Havana's high temple of Cuban quaffing. Here, bartending virtuoso Constantino Ribalaigua Vert perfected the drink's proportions and established it as a classic. Cabrera experimented with a variety of vermouths and rums. His ultimate preference was for Banks 7, a blend of rums from an array of countries, and either Comozor Dolin Blanc Vermouth de Chambéry. His choice of curação is Pierre Ferrand.

El Presidente is a cocktail that thrives in obscurity, invariably pleased when an adventurous toper discovers it. Cabrera admits that it's not one of his top sellers. His customers are perhaps hesitant to order a rum drink that fails to fraternize with lime. "But when they try it," Cabrera says, "they fall in love." @

E Presidente

Yield: I cocktail

INGREDIENTS

11/2 oz. lightly aged gold rum 3/4 oz. vermouth de Chambéry 1/2 oz. dry curação 1 barspoon homemade grenadine (recipe follows) I orange peel I maraschino cherry

PREPARATION

Stir all ingredients except orange peel and cherry with ice until chilled. Strain into a coupe. Twist orange peel over glass to express oils, and add cherry.

For the grenadine: INGREDIENTS

11/2 cups white sugar I cup pomegranate juice I orange peel 1/2 barspoon orange flower water

PREPARATION

In a saucepan, oombine sugar and pomegranate juice over medium-high heat. While stirring, bring to cusp of a boil, then remove from heat. Let cool; add orange peel and orange flower water, and stir. Let cool, then refrigerate for up to 1 month. Makes about 1 cup.

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A Whole Latke Love

APRIL McGREGER GIVES SOUTHERN FLAIR TO THE TRADITIONAL HANUKKAH DISH

By Kim Severson



pril McGreger, who for eleven years ran the beloved pickle and preserve business Farmer's Daughter outside of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, is in a mixed marriage. She was raised a Christian in Mississippi. Her husband, the illustrator Phil Blank, grewup in a Jewish family in Pennsylvania.

Anyone who has been in one of those relationships knows that cooking for two sets of holidays can bring on what McGreger calls "celebratory cooking overload." The cultural crush can be even more difficult when a Southern cook who made her name with hyperlocal products such as Bradford watermelon rind pickles and scuppernong chutney wades into hundreds of years of Eastern European culinary tradition.

All of this helps explain why McGreger will spend Hanukkah frying dozens of sweet potato latkes for her husband's extended family. In 2018, she closed up shop and moved to northwest Philadelphia with Blank and their then seven-year-old son, Mo. The move came about the way many of these things do. Blank had retired from the reference librarian business he started. McGreger was tired of her own business, which was

complicated and labor-intensive and "didn't scale well," she says. They hated leaving the Chapel Hill area, where they had met in front of a left-leaning bookstore twenty years earlier, but there were grandparents and siblings and cousins to consider. Friends had moved north to Philly, too, including the violin player in her husband's klezmer band.

The move has brought other pleasures, among them the opportunity to perfect her latkes. She starts by shredding sweet potatoes and onions in a food processor. Her favorite is a starchy Japanese variety that is white on the inside and purple on the outside, but any good orange Southern sweet potato will do. She salts the grated tubers and lets them sit for about a half hour so the shreds release moisture. Then she whirls them dry in a salad spinner and saves the water in a bowl. When the starch from the potatoes sinks to the bottom, she drains the water, scoops out the starch, and mixes it back into the potatoes, along with a generous amount of beaten egg. Only a small amount of flour, if any, is needed to finish the job.

"It solves many of the latke problems," McGreger says of her technique. "Water is the biggest problem, which is why people add a lot of flour, and then that changes the texture."

She fries them until their lacy edges are crisp. Mc-Greger is ecumenical about the oil. If she has some duck fat or chicken fat, she'll use it. Peanut or avocado oils are good options, too, but canola will do fine. "Just no olive oil," she says. (Too much flavor.)

She hopes sweet potato latkes will help her son stay close to his Southern roots. His mother, after all, grew up on a sweet potato farm in Vardaman, Mississippi, which calls itself the Sweet Potato Capital of the World.

"I'm lucky because he loves okra and sweet potatoes," she says. "He even asked for sweet potato pie for his birthday."

spinner and spin to remove excess

water. Reserve the spun-vegetable

water. Transfer the potato mixture

back to the mixing bowl and use your

hands to mix in the eggs and pepper.

the reserved vegetable water until

only the white sediment (sweet pota-

to starch) at the bottom of the bowl

remains. Gently mix this starch into

the potato mixture with your hands,

along with the flour, if the mixture

seems too wet.

Carefully pour off the liquid from



MEETTHE CHEF: APRIL MCGREGER

Hometown: Vardaman, Mississippi

Favorite piece of kitchen equipment: Her copper jam pans.

Most useful piece of kitchen equipment:
A wooden spoon with a flattened end for scraping the bottoms of pots.

Sweet Potato Latkes

Yield: About 15-20 latkes

INGREDIENTS

4 medium sweet potatoes
(about 2 lb.), peeled
I large yellow onion, peeled
I¼ tsp. kosher salt
4 large eggs
½ tsp. freshly ground
black pepper
¼ cup self-rising flour (optional)
High-heat cooking oil, such as

duck or chicken fat or peanut, avocado, or canola oil, for frying

PREPARATION

Fit a food processor with the grating blade. Cut the sweet potatoes and onion into pieces that you can feed through the processor tube. (Keeping the pieces as large as possible will oreate a longer, more attractive shred, McGreger says.) Shred the potatoes and onion and transfer to a large mixing bowl. Gently massage the salt into the potato mixture. Set aside for 20–30 minutes until the vegetables have released their water. Transfer the mixture to a salad

Preheat oven to 200°F.
Place 2 large skillets over medium
heat and add oil to about ½-inch
deep. Test the oil with a drop of water;

it should sizzle when heated. Use a fork to drop generous dollops (about 2 heaping tbsp.) of the latke mixture into the pan. Leave at least an inch between latkes and leave the edges uneven and messy for lacy, crispy edges. Work quickly and adjust the temperature if the oil gets too hot. Fry a few minutes on each side, watching carefully so the latkes don't burn. Add more oil to the skillets as necessary, and remove any browned bits between batches. Transfer latkes to a rack placed over a sheet pan and hold in the oven until ready to serve.

Serve with homemade applesauce and sour cream.



TASTEMAKER

Roll of a Lifetime

NATHALIE DUPREE, THE DOYENNE OF SOUTHERN COOKING, REFLECTS ON HELPING TO SHAPE BOTH THE REGION'S CUISINE AND THOSE WHO MAKE IT By Virginia Willis



AGE:79 HOME BASE: Charleston,

South Carolina KNOWN FOR:

Her work as a pioneering cooking teacher, television personality, and author of fifteen cookbooks, including her latest. Nathalie Dupree's Favorite Stories & Recipes, released this fall.

Dupree with the tools of the biscuitmaking trade.

First cooking job: "I had a small business in London called Just Desserts. For my very first delivery, I had cleaned lemon rind from the grater with a pastry brush, and some bristles fell into the lemon soufflé. So my first customer complained about the hair." How times have changed: "In 1959, when I first wanted to be a cook, you couldn't find one lady cooking in a restaurant. [French chef] Paul Bocuse famously said, 'I'd rather have them in my bed than in my kitchen.' So, let's face it, we weren't particularly welcome." Perceptions, too: "When I started, the professional cooking world did not acknowledge Southern cooking or understand there was any technique involved in it." On transitioning from chef to teacher: "Some of the diners at my restaurant in Social Circle [Georgia] asked me to $teach cooking \ classes, so I practiced on folks. If ound that I loved it. I just love seeing the light go on. "A {\it distinguished} it is not also in the light go on the li$ visitor: "When Julia Child came to Rich's Cooking School in Atlanta [which Dupree opened in 1975], she wanted regional Junior League cookbooks. She understood the food in those books was valuable. Smart chefs want to eat local food." His and hers: "The women's movement had just started before I moved to London. I would come home from consciousness meetings but had to ask my husband to open the ketchup. I find it's best if the roles are intertwined." Debuting in 1985 with New Southern Cooking, her first of three hundred episodes: "White Lily said they wanted to fund a show on PBS. I found a young female producer, Cynthia Stevens Graubart, and off we went." How benefits of supporting other women are like cooking pork chops: "If you put one pork chop in a pan and turn the heat on high, the pork chop will burn. If you put two or more pork chops in a pan and turn the heat on high, they will feed off the fat of one another." On her legacy: "I never thought about [it], I am happy with my place in the world." •



The Family Seafood Joint

FORKIN

FINDING COMFORT IN THE CLASSICS AT JOHNNY'S HALF SHELL IN WASHINGTON, D.C.







he text from Jess came at about the same time a plate of fresh-shucked oysters—fried soft and floated on chervil-flecked tartar sauce alongside a stack of pickled vegetables—hit the bar top: "I'm happy and with my boys." After moving our son into his freshman dorm at American University, my wife, Blair, and I had retreat-

ed to Johnny's Half Shell, in search of good food and

steadying drink. Jess had found a home in his new home of Washington, D.C. Three hours, two cocktails, one bottle of Champagne, and half the menu later, we found our home, too.

Chef Ann Cashion and front man Johnny Fulchino opened their first D.C. restaurant in 1995. Cashion's Eat Place, in the Ad-

ams Morgan neighborhood, leveraged the local farm markets, French and Italian influences, and scenes from Cashion's Jackson, Mississippi, childhood. A native of Massachusetts with a haddock brogue, Fulchino built the wine cellar and worked the crowd. The menu—from crisp sweetbreads on wilted greens to

pastured chicken with pan sauce—changed nightly, and the service was smart and informal. Reviewers described Cashion's as one of the city's best chef-driven New American restaurants.

Johnny's, which Cashion and Fulchino opened down the hill in Dupont Circle in 1999 and moved here to the original Cashion's location after that restaurant closed in 2016, has always focused, instead, on repertory cooking. Led by Jorge Rubio, an El Salvador-born vet-

eran of twenty years in the restaurant, the Johnny's kitchen does right by standards that cooks from the mid-Atlantic, the Gulf Coast, and beyond have contributed to the canon of American classics.

Brett Anderson, who served as the restaurant critic at the *Times-Picayune* in New Orleans for nearly twenty years, in-

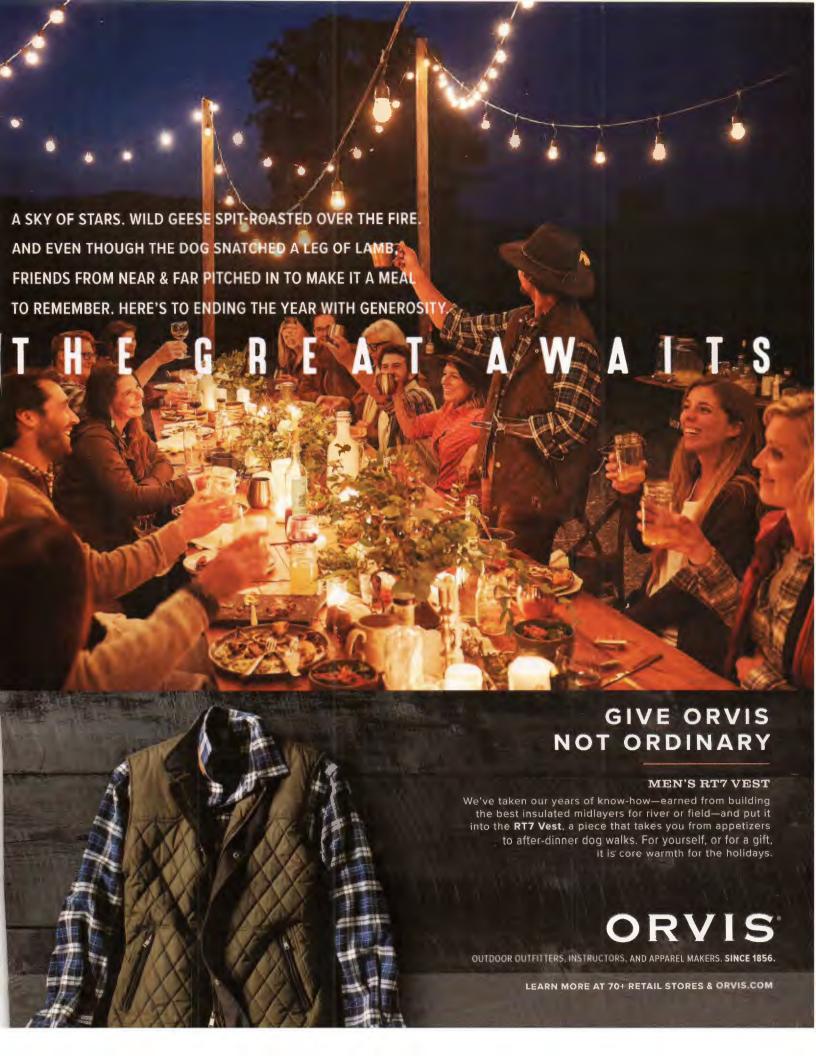
troduced me to the term repertory cooking. He compared the music of New Orleans to the cooking of New Orleans. Mardi Gras Indian chants and filé gumbo are both repertory. They require that the artist know the canon well enough to replicate the traditional forms, he said, and riff on those forms to make songs and dishes

Power Lunch

Suits and sev puri at a D.C. institution

Less than two blocks from the White House, the Bombay Club, a luxe Indian restaurant, has served as a D.C. power-broker dining room since Bill Clinton was president. Get what the suits order: sev puri, a wheat crisp topped with avocado, mango, onion, and yogurt; and the Bombay thali, an elegant platter of vegetable dishes. Spoon into kheer (green cardamom rice pudding) for dessert.-J.T.E.

From left: Johnny Fulchino and chef Ann Cashion; grilled lobster; a touch of maritime flavor in the dining room.



that are old and new, iterative and graceful.

Seated on a raised platform, framed by mod columns, regulars lean in to the long curved bar for such happy-hour specials as five-dollar cocktails, five-dollar pours from Johnny's cellar, and tendollar plates of those delicate fried oysters. Maritime knickknacks and flattened oyster pails decorate the walls. Books by and about some of Fulchino's favorite musicians—Keith Jarrett, Bill Wyman, Sam Cooke—stock the shelves. Songs by those musicians stream from the speakers, a reminder that not all restaurant sounds need be schlock.

When Cashion's opened here a quarter century ago, Adams Morgan was home to late-night bars and falafel takeaways. Todayit's comparatively swank. An old church is now a new boutique hotel. This version of Johnny's, confident and unpretentious, is a legacy of that old neighborhood. Some of the original menu items endure, including a brace of chicken wings that owes its origins to Buffalo, New York, but has fully paid down that debt. Frenched by vet-

eran cook Natividad Diaz to clear away sinew and form a perfect lollypop, those drumettes get basted with lime juice and Tabasco as they cook over a charcoal fire. Dunked in a green goddess dressing that goes long on garlic, they are just the kind of repertory cooking that reaches its apogee at Johnny's.

From the bar we watch regulars tuck into blue leather booths, set against a mottled red-and-beige brick wall, lit by the neon Cashion's sign that once hung outside. Following their lead, we eat a horseradish-brightened shrimp cocktail, a fat rib eye crossed by a pair of onion rings, a crab cake that challenges Baltimore institution Faidley's for the crown, and a pork schnitzel, served with a heap of potato salad that tastes, in the best way, like the leavings from the bottom of a Lowcountry boil pot.

Cooking and music, born of a place and a people, are conversations across generations. The ongoing conversation at Johnny's reminds diners that great restaurants don't have to rely on newness and novelty and pretense. At a moment when the hospitality industry struggles to recruit and keep kitchen staff, and labor costs spiral higherandhigher, repertory cooking, Cashion and Fulchino say, is a more sustainable path for restaurants that aim to make it through the 2020s. To master the classics, they suggest, is more rewarding than overextending the abilities of their kitchen while chasing the next trend.

Rattled that our only son is now going to make his home fourteen hours from our home in Mississippi, Blair and I want to extendour dinner. But we don't want dessert. Our lobster arrives with the claws already cracked, as if we've been given permission to drive golf balls from the children's tee. Picking white meat perfumed with charcoal smoke and fennel from a red shell, dunking ragged hunks of that sweet flesh into a crock of melted butter, spritzing lemon wedges to counterpunch the richness, we taste the straightforward cooking that will sustain our little family, now that Blair and I have claimed Johnny's as our D.C. family dining room. G



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WHAT'S IN SEASON

Candy Crush

THIS GEM OF A WINTER SQUASH GETS SWEETER WITH AGE

By Jenny Everett

few years ago, when Brandon Carter was opening FARM, his restaurant in Bluffton, South Carolina, he pored through lists from nearby farmers, searching for exciting ingredients. "I'd never heard of Candy Roaster squash, and was intrigued by the name," says the chef, who grew up in North Georgia. "When I saw

it, it was unlike any other squash that I'd ever worked with. It's elongated, almost like a baguette. And the flavor is incredible. There's this deep, complex sweetness to it." Apricot-colored with light green streaks, the tenpound winter squash has bright orange flesh resembling pumpkin. Candy Roasters were originally grown by the Cherokee, and the squashes haven't roamed too far from the Appalachians. These days, you're most likely to find them at farmers' markets in Tennessee, Georgia, and the Carolinas between September and January, If you happen upon some, grab a few—they will keep for several months in a pantry. To roast, halve lengthwise and seed, then drizzle with olive oil, season with salt, and top with sage. "They're large, so a whole one is probably too much for a family of four," Carter says. "You can roast it at the beginning of the week, and eat some the first night and save the rest for later." At FARM, the chef often works in Asian influences to complement the squash's flavor (see recipe; if you can't find Candy Roaster, substitute butternut or Red Kuri squash). As for any squashes you stash, don't be surprised if they become even more candy-like. "When they've sat awhile, you can definitely tell a difference," Carter says. "The sugar really intensifies, and the squash truly becomes perfectly sweet." G

THE CHEF RECOMMENDS:

Candy Roaster Squash and Carolina Gold Rice Pilaf

Yield: 4-6 servings

INGREDIENTS

2 cups vegetable stock 1 shallot 4 cloves garlic 1-inch piece ginger, peeled 2 That chiles 1 tsp. coriander seeds 4 allspice berries 2 thsp. white vinegar 2 tbsp. coconut oil I cup Carolina Gold rice

1 cup Candy Roaster squash, diced 1/4 cup roasted peanuts, chopped 1/4 cup golden raisins 8 mint leaves, chiffonaded

PREPARATION In a small saucepan, heat stock and keep

warm. Meanwhile, process shallot, garlic, ginger, chiles, coriander seeds, allspice berries, and vinegar in a blender to form a paste. Heat coconut oil in another saucepan or a Dutch oven on medium, When hot but not quite smoking, add paste. Cook, stirring constantly, until liquid has evaporated, about 2-3 minutes. Add rice

Add squash and the stock. Stir once and bring to a boil over high heat. Cover and reduce heat to low. Cook 10 minutes. Remove from heat and let sit 5 minutes. Fluff, and stir in peanuts. raisins, and mint. Season to taste.

and toast for a minute.







FAMILY FUN

Sandcastles, catamaran cruises, snow cones—you'll find adventures for the whole family in Destin-Fort Walton Beach

In Destin-Fort Walton Beach, with its miles of sugarwhite beaches and waterways teeming with wildlife, childhood is an adventure and the great outdoors its playground. Here in Florida's northwest corner, children (and their parents) are inspired to embrace their curiosity and engage with the natural world around them. Where better to start than the beach? Soft and cool to the touch even on the hottest afternoons,

the Appalachian quartz sand is ideal for sandcastle construction. Let the world-champion sand sculptor Rick Mungeam and his team of "castle coaches" at **Beach Sand Sculptures** help turn your child's wildest dreams into reality. Your creation might not last beyond the next rainstorm, but the memories certainly will.

The area's on-water activities are as diverse as they are approachable, so test your sea legs while you're in town. Whether you favor a paddleboard, a

kayak, or a canoe, dip your paddle in the calm waters of Choctawhatchee Bay. Or explore the thirty-mile waterscape via catamaran or traditional sailboat. If you're after dinner or just a fish tale, Destin-Fort Walton Beach offers a wealth of opportunities to wet your line—both onshore and off. If a deep-water experience is what you crave, link up with an expert guide; many local outfits tailor offshore fishing expeditions to families, schooling kids (and kids at heart) on the joys of hauling in their own snapper, cobia, grouper,

or another of the more than twenty edible species famously plentiful in Gulf Coast waters. At the end of the day, let your deckhand clean and fillet your fish.

Back on solid ground, the fun continues as you seek out one of the many restaurants where a chef will happily cook up the day's prize. If it turns out you're better at casting than catching, don't worry; Gulf-to-Table dining is plentiful, and

institutions such as **Dewey Destin's** offer standing "catch of the day" specials. After dinner, treat the family to New Orleans-style shaved ice at nearby Dewey Destin's Snowballs. If you're looking for additional flipflop-friendly spots where the troops can refuel, the Gulf-front **Boardwalk** on **Okaloosa Island** offers an inviting array of eateries and activities for the whole family, including a Fourth of July-worthy fireworks show every Wednesday night during the summer.

Even your hotel stay on the Emerald Coast can feel a bit like magic with a roster of welcoming accommodations designed to meet the needs of every family. To be at the center of it all, look no further than **Emerald Grande at HarborWalk Village**, where guests can make a splash in the property's 2,500-square-foot swimming pool, situated six stories high with sweeping views of the Gulf below. If you ask us, it's the perfect spot for a cannonball contest.



TACORI





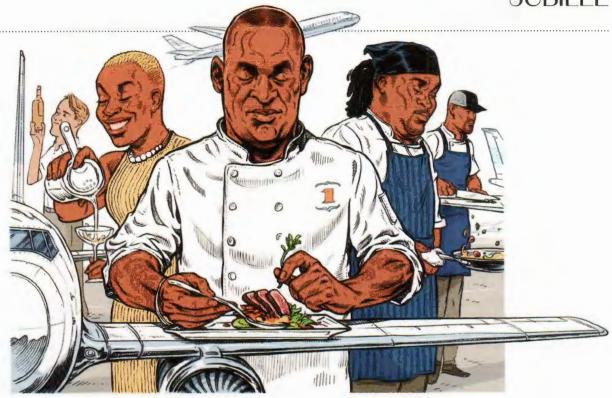
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ANNIVERSARY

Flying High

WITH ONE FLEW SOUTH ENTERING ITS SECOND DECADE, A LOOK AT HOW THE ATLANTA AIRPORT RESTAURANT REROUTED SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY

By John Kessler

biles deliver an average of 275,000 passengers to Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport every day. They grab PowerBars and boxed salads from kiosks, hunker down for a few minutes in the food courts over fried chicken tenders and beef lo mein, or knock back a few drinks in one of the nine Delta Sky Clubs. But some of these fliers will find their way to One Flew South, by the top of the escalator on Concourse E, just past the Swarovski shop and across the atrium from the TGI Fridays. With its bottles of spirits visible through a window and its louvered wood walls, One Flew South looks like a high-end duty-free shop. It isn't. It's an oasis—an airport bar and restaurant like nothing else on earth.

lanes mostly, but also trains and automo-

I've been going to One Flew South since its opening party in December 2008, an affair I remember being replete with dignitaries and duck sliders in equal measure. An escort led us partygoers en masse from the main terminal to the restaurant, where the airport's CEO and tall, dapper Delta suits stood with hands outstretched. I drank excellent cocktails and kept my eyes peeled for the hors d'oeuvre trays, not realizing that we'd all be sitting down for a full meal. As the chief food writer for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, I was getting all the principals paraded in front of me. Terry Harps of Global Concessions and Jackmont Hospitality's Daniel Halpern, whose companies co-own One Flew South, were there for handshakes and hellos. But the publicist, Elizabeth Moore, was more interested in introducing me to the all-star food-and-beverage team that had been lured away from Louisville's Seelbach hotel as a unit-executive chef Todd Richards, with his team of Duane Nutter and barman Jerry Slater, as well as Reggie Washington, who had been chef at the Alabama governor's mansion.

As Richards reminds me every time I see him, I made a terrible decision that night not to review One Flew South. I figured it would be like recommending a country club, a dining experience only available to some. I reported on it for news and trend stories but never took a broad look at its culinary impact. But what an impact it had: This minority-owned-and-operated restaurant was one of the first to reclaim the developing narrative of Southern food from an African American perspective. Richards, who would go on to open several restaurants in Atlanta, set a course for a generation of chefs



to follow. Think of Mashama Bailey at the Grey in Savannah and Edouardo Jordan at JuneBaby in Seattle.

More than a great restaurant, One Flew South also had one of the best bars in Atlanta, if not the entire country. After a couple of years, Slater moved on to other projects and Tiffanie Barriere took charge. Here was a black woman with short platinumblondhair, a brilliant smile, and a voice like Macy Gray's. Regulars arranged flights to spend time at one of the bar's ten seats and texted her when they landed.

"Reggie and Duane and Todd and Tiffanie worked that room like it was the idealized doorstep for the American South." says John T. Edge, director of the Southern Foodways Alliance and a Garden & Gun contributing editor. "They did something unprecedented: They set a welcome table in the airport. They said, 'Let us welcome you to our South,' and their South was black, their South was cool, their South was hip, their South was great."

PREPARING FOR TAKEOFF

One Flew South opened as a joint venture between two of the larger concessionaires at Hartsfield-Jackson: Global Concessions, helmed by Terry Harps, and Jackmont Hospitality, run by Daniel Halpern. These two men were used to competing for dining dollars at the airport, but here they joined forces, Their publicist, Elizabeth Moore, arranged an ad hoc audition with a chef crew visiting Atlanta.

Halpern: The space was unused ticket counters. When it became available, the airport articulated they wanted a restaurant. Something upscale, but they left us to figure out what it was. What Terry and I really wanted to do was work with an African American chef who could serve Southern food with an emphasis on the African American culinary experience. We're two African American-owned companies. [Harps is black, while Halpern's partners in Jackmont Hospitality are Valerie Richardson Jackson and Brooke Jackson Edmond, the widow and daughter, respectively, of Maynard Jackson, Atlanta's first black mayor, who founded the company.]

Richards: There was just so much serendipity. They wanted to do a restaurant that featured black chefs. We [Richards, Nutter, Slater, and Washington] happened to



KNIVES HAD TO BE CHAINED TO THE WORKSTATIONS-THEY WERE TETHERED TO THE TABLES LIKE DOG LEASHES"



be in town for the High Museum wine auction, and we knew Elizabeth from the Southern Foodways Alliance, But mainly we were trying to leave Louisville and get back to Atlanta.

Moore: Todd and Duane came and cooked at my house while Jerry made cocktails. I remember having to explain to Terry and Daniel what a James Beard Award was.

Richards: Duane and I had been together off and on from the time of Chef [Darryl] Evans [the African American former head chef of what is now the Four Seasons Hotel Atlanta, where the two chefs met in the late 1980s]. We've always had this rapport from growing up in the kitchen together. Maybe it's that I'm left-handed and he's right-handed.

Moore: We all got together for this threeday naming exercise in a private room at a client's restaurant. We had these little sticky notes all over the walls. We had a bunch of aviation terms, but they all seemed really dry and definitely didn't speak to what we were trying to do. I came up with the name. I was thinking about how one would tell a story or share a memory: "That one time when I flew South ... "

Halpern: In early meetings with the airport, they suggested we use materials indigenous to the region. Working with [Atlanta restaurant architect] Bill Johnson, we got Georgia Cherokee marble for the counters, and heart pine reclaimed lumber for the wood slats we used instead of walls. People walking by the slats could look inside to see the forest mural along the back wall. Some thought it was a private club.

Richards: After we signed on, we had only a couple of months [before opening]. The restaurant was already in construction, and, honestly, the line wasn't set up to be the most efficient. We had to make some adjustments, also to our style of cooking.

Nutter: All the knives had to be chained to the workstations—they were tethered to the tables like dog leashes [due to airport rules]. I had to keep a drill in my tool kit for when we needed to swap them out.

Slater: We did this soft opening, and the owners invited all the Delta executives. But they really overinvited, and it got crazy that night. One of those Delta guys came into the kitchen while we were trying to get the food out and asked why the Benton's bacon-vou know, it's an artisanal product-looked different on sandwiches. Duane was so in the weeds and he just said, "You're going to have to go back in the dining room and take that shit up with Jesus."

Richards: After all the media parties, we got feedback from the Department of Aviation. They said they had never seen anything like this.

RAREFIED AIR

This unusual mixture—high-end spirits, upscale Southern fare, and a sushi barcaught on immediately in 2009 with airport executives, frequent fliers, and the press.

Moore: After Todd and Duane developed the first menu, I remember thinking nobody quite knewwhat to do with it. I mean, they had this Lowcountry bouillabaisse and I was thinking, "How do you sell an eighteen-dollar soup in an airport?"

Richards: We [had been] doing high-end stuff [at the Seelbach]-foams, molecular gastronomy. We toned that down, but still we showcased a repertoire of dishes. A pork belly dish we made for Daniel and Terry at the tasting ended up on the menu. We were serving duck and fresh fish that we broke down every day.

Nutter: One time I was trying to break down this big ole fish-it was about five feet long. I kept going at it and cutting myself and finally realized I had to unscrew [the knife chained to the table]. It would have



WINTERPROOF

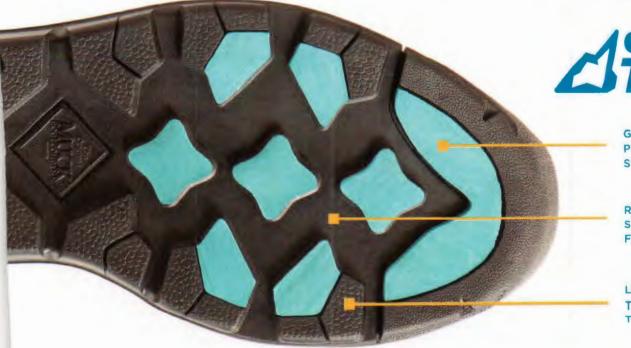


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been a ten-thousand-dollar fine if the inspector came in then. I did get busted once. Some new guy showed him where I kept [knives] hidden in the ceiling tiles.

Slater: A lot of the guests at that time were European Concourse Ewasthen the international terminal], and they got what the food and drink was about right away. We had to add gratuity to the bill because Europeans don't always tip. But people had no problem spending \$150 on a bottle of wine.

Moore: They ended up doing triple the business they were expecting. Soon after we opened I was sitting at the bar next to this German dude, and he was trying to figure out what to order. I suggested he try the 23-year-old Pappy Van Winkle, which was fifty bucks a shot. He didn't blink an eye.

Slater: We had come from Kentucky, and Iknew Julian [Van Winkle, the master distiller]. We ended up getting two bottles of everything in his whole line to open with. That really was pretty rare. But it wasn't just the Pappy. Everything had to be curated. We believed that people would get it. Maybe they got it a little too well.

Nutter: Bosses would come by to see why there were always expense reports for this place. A Delta executive came out to say everyone is changing their flight plans to come here. It was kind of like Cheers, but nobody was from Atlanta.

Richards: There were people who became huge fans right away, and there were some detractors. One lady complained when her BLT went off the menu, and I had to tell her, 'I'm sorry, it's not tomato season now.' She just kept checking in every time she came through Atlanta.

Barriere: It was insane the amount of business we were doing. We had only ten seats, and usually about 80 percent of the folks there were bar regulars. If I really loved you, I'd let you sit at the service bar.

Maggie Hewes Adams [who became a regular customer in 2010]: I live in Key West, but I'm a veterinary consultant, so every week I fly all over the world, and I stop in One Flew South two to four times. I remember there were two people who came in and got pretty inebriated. They didn't know



"I WAS SITTING AT THE BAR BY THIS GERMAN DUDE, AND HE WAS TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT TO ORDER. I SUGGESTED THE 23-YEAR-OLD PAPPY, WHICH WAS FIFTY **BUCKS A SHOT"**



each other at first, but after forty-five minutes, they walked around the corner and started making out. But the main thing was everyone sitting there had a rapport with the bartenders and each other.

Barriere: We'd see the same people Mondays and Wednesdays and then Tuesdays and Thursdays. There was a couple who met because they would both order chicken noodle soup. I made cocktails for them, and soon they were getting really flirty. They'd plan to meet at the bar. They stopped coming for a while and I was worried. But then they came in with a baby, which we named Chicken Noodle Soup.

Hewes Adams: Pretty quickly [Tiffanie] became part of what I consider my travel family-the gate agents, the Delta lounge folks. I see them more than people at home. It's like having a bunch of crazy brothers and sisters who also bring you good food.

Nutter: There was the one guy who never sat, so we knew to move the chair away for him before taking him to the table. Then there was the guy who always came in for the scallop dish. One time a manager, Brad, had to tell him we had taken it off the menu. "That's the wrong answer, Brad!" he said. And from then on he was known to all as the Wrong Answer Guy.

Barriere: I had a lot of celebrities come to visit. Mos Def, Ludacris, Usher, Samuel L. Jackson. Laurence Fishburne was a really cool dude. Nicolas Cage did this full spin, hands in the air like, 'Look, I'm here, everybody!' Robin Givens came, and we got her really drunk. The one I was most excited

about was Ric Flair, the wrestler. And we had several parties. We did several birthdays. Even a bridal shower.

Nutter: The menu took a big change when Concourse F[the new international terminal] opened. I realized I couldn't run foie gras specials no more, because I now had Spirit Airlines next to me. I got to switch up a few things. Hello, meat-loaf sandwich.

IN FOR THE LONG HAUL

By 2016, much of the original crew had flown the coop. Nutter and Washington left to open Southern National in Mobile. Slater now co-owns the Expat in Athens, Georgia, with his wife, Krista. Barriere works as a brand consultant in the spirits industry. Richards has authored an award-winning cookbook (Soul: A Chef's Culinary Evolution in 150 Recipes) but still manages the culinary team at One Flew South, which remains busier than ever. According to Halpern, it brings in about \$6 million in revenue per year. The chef for the past two years, Cedric McCroery, grew up near the airport in East Point, an Atlanta suburb.

McCroery: There were so many things going on in this kitchen that I had never seen before anywhere in my career. I started on the grill side, then went and worked the sushi bar. I seriously never thought that would be a skill I could add to my repertoire. But my goal was to come here and learn. What have I learned? That you can tell a story through food.

Richards: Right from the start it felt groundbreaking. How many restaurants have been this successful for ten years?

Nutter: We took a whole different approach because we came from a fine-dining background. We looked at these customers for who they were. It's just a different group of people who travel for a living, and for them we were a respite.

Hewes Adams: There isn't anything like One Flew South anywhere in the world. Not in Dubai, not in Japan, not in Germany, definitely not in the United States. I'm a Southern girl, and I have a good appreciation for hospitality. Maybe that's it, that little bit of Southern tradition, that Southern hospitality that sets this place apart. G

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MEET THE LOCAL MAKERS TRANSFORMING THE CITY INTO A HOT SPOT FOR SOUTHERN CREATIVITY

olumbia has long been a South Carolina gem, and when it comes to Southern-made goods, the city's local artisans hold their own. The area has fostered a growing community of creatives, ushering in a new era alive with expression and originality. From artists

and craftsmen to designers and innovators, local visionaries are the driving force behind a surge of life in the Palmetto State capital, where there's now

more than ever to discover.

Any Columbia native will recognize "the Chicken Man," an iconic creation by Ernest Lee. The local artist has been painting and printing his brightly colored chickens, palmetto trees, and other images on everything from large-scale wood panels to T-shirts for the last five decades, and you're likely to spot a few on any jaunt through the city. One Eared Cow Glass has occupied a space near the riverfront since the '90s, and is another mainstay of the Columbia arts scene. The prolific glassblowing studio is home to a group of artists creating breathtaking glasswork of all kinds, from vibrant swirled bowls and vases to light fixtures and sculptures.

When it comes to style, a fresh crop of local tastemakers are also generating buzz. Leather

goods purveyor L11 creates bespoke bags, each handcrafted by designer Laddie Howard. The runway line includes easy totes, shoulder-slung saddle bags, and sleek duffels perfect for a weekend away, each made in buttery, rich-hued leather. Also in the accessories department, Columbia-based **Hippy Do-Da Creations** is a boutique operation crafting eye-catching jewelry and home goods in silver, brass, crystals, and precious stones,

including delicate, hand-stamped spoons with personalized messages, ready to be gifted.

Unique Columbia-made wares aren't limited to fashion and decor—Whiskey Wood has you covered for cocktail hour, too. The company's "ruggedly-sophisticated" stirrers come in

various woods, allowing the spirit to aerate and mingle with their smoky scent, loosening your palate before the first sip. And for

From top: A toast with whiskey stirrers made by Whiskey Wood; colorful art by Ernest Lee, "the Chicken Man"

a side of something savory or sweet, look no further than the parade of goods whipped up by **Adams Apple Mercantile**. What started as a single apple butter now encompasses a full suite of Southern accourtements such as jams and dressings to stock the pantry.

Amidawave of new bars, breweries, restaurants, and museums, Columbia, South Carolina's small businesses and artistic outlets are

delivering a fresh energy. As a budding cultural hub pulsing with inspiration, the city is poised to surprise and delight.





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Out of the Box

PICKING OUT PRESENTS BECOMES A JOY WITH THESE FIFTY-FOUR MEMORABLE IDEAS

■ PAPERWEIGHTS

■ PAPERWEIGHTS
Like insects preserved
in amber, the dandelion fluff, sea lavender, and bunny tail
grass that Sola Cube
artfully suspends in
resin become natural
treasures (\$35-\$85;
eastfork.com),

GOOD

Clockwise from bottom left:

- **KNIFE** This pocketknife from Son of a Sailor is practical and not too precious (\$150; sonofasailor.co).
- HAT Whether you're walking the dog or hunting with one, this cashmere beanie by Saved will capyourlook (\$225; saved-ny.com).
- PICK-UPSTICKS Printworks taps into nostalgia with its

refresh of the classic kids'game (\$22; print worksmarket.com).

■ LOTION AND

COMB A porcelain bottle filled with body milk, and a comb (far right), both from L'Officine Universelle Buly, define stocking-sized luxury (\$56-\$67; buly1803 .com).

■ FIGURINES

Papier-mâché flamingos, pelicans, and guinea hens by the artisans at Mbare call to mind feathered friends familiar to the South (\$9 each; mbare.com).

- **BOWL** This vessel from Jayson Home made of Himalayan rock salt is as well suited for finishing salt as it is lime slices at the bar (\$30; jaysonhome.com).
- PÂTES DE FRUITS Twenty Degrees Chocolates employs French confection techniques for its gelées (\$18 for twelve pieces; 20 degrees chocolates.com).
- **BOTTLE** The guard on this reusable bottle by Kinto keeps liquids from flowing too fast (\$38; food52.com).

■ SERVERS

Eye-grabbing brass serving spoons by Lost Cove Jewelry in North Carolina make useful heirlooms (\$190; lost covejewelry.com).

■ HOURGLASSES Enjoy fifteen minutes in the moment with hourglasses by Hay

(\$18 each; hay.com).

- SOAK This soak by Charleston, South Carolina's Contents Co. blends bergamot oil with Dead Sea salts and more for serious self-care (\$12; thecontentsco.com).
- SCISSORS This design from Heaven in Earth can weather the dishwasher, cut bones, and even open bottles (\$74; heaveninearth.co).
- WALLET Ditch the brown bifold for this lively green cardholder by Muur (\$55; muur.nyc.com).

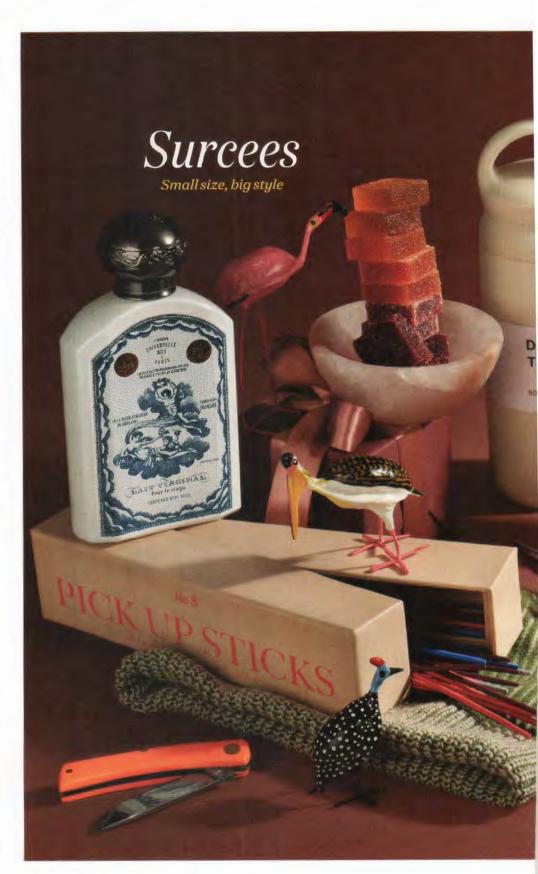
■ ORNAMENTS

The wooden ornaments by Sir Madam won't shatter if a dog brushes the tree (\$54 for five; lulu andgeorgia.com).

■ NAPKINS

Not to insinuate anything about folks at the holiday buffet, but piggy cocktail napkins by Biscuit provide asly wink (\$50 for a set of four; biscuit-home.com).

- COOKIES This shortbread features real flowers, placed by baker Valerie Curry at Carriage House Cookies; order early for holiday delivery (\$42-\$45; etsy.com).
- STRAWS Kick plastic with splurgy silver-plated straws by Christofle (\$168 for two; christofle.com).





GOOD HUNTING

HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE



From top:

■ MEN'S WATCH

The new Luminor Due GMT Power Reserve 45mm by Panerai fuses aesthetics and technology with aplomb. The slimmer-profile timepiece features an indigo leather band, a brushed titanium case, a blue dial, both Arabic numerals and hour markers, plus it can withstand water down to thirty meters (\$12,100; panerai.com).

HINGED BRACELETA

fanciful woodland scene of deer and botanicals adorns every surface of this eighteen-karat gold and diamond bracelet by Temple St. Clair (\$85,000; temple stclair.com).

■ WOMEN'S WATCH

Is this piece a yellow gold and diamond watch, or a lapislazuli-studded bracelet? The ingenious design by Van Cleef & Arpels will keep that secret for you till you're ready to share it (\$37,800; vancleefarpels.com).

RING Consider cocktail rings like this labradorite piece by Julie Vos your version of Wonder Woman cuffs-strong and confident accessories (\$185; julievos.com).

■ LINK BRACELET

The mixed-media design of this eighteen-karat gold and black ceramic link bracelet by Monica Rich Kosann gives an art deco twist to the charm bracelet tradition (\$7,750; monicarich kosann.com).



HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE



From top:

- JACKET AND FLASK Tom Beckbe has debuted a women's Tensaw jacket, a feminine counterpoint to its original waxed canvas men's version-the flattering silhouette is tailored just right (\$495). And the brand's flasks (in bag and bottom left; \$150 each) are just as fitting for the field (tombeckbe.com).
- BAG A stylish take on the old-school ditty bag, this teninch design by Mississippi's Wren & lvy perfectly accommodates shells, a tipple of choice, and an extra pair of gloves (\$385; ggfieldshop.com).
- BOOTS Waterproofhunting boots by the Original Muck Boot Company come with a smart twist: The sides roll down to reveal a blaze-orange lining that will help keep you visible while crisscrossing the woods (\$140; muckboot company.com).
- BOOTJACK

Ease your heels off in style with this English-crafted white oak bootjack from Heaven in Earth, a piece that almost looks too good to get muddy (\$49; heaveninearth.co).

SHIRT Sport meets conservation in this flannel by Orvis composed of fabric made from recycled plastics and oyster shells—the ideal base layer for an early morning out the door (\$98; orvis.com).

PICCHIOTTI



ELIZABETH BRUNS, INC.
JEWELERS

GOOD HUNTING

HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE





Left to right, from top:

COTTON PAJAMAS The

new pajamas by Texas-based Mirth feel like air on the skin (\$90-\$110; mirthcaftans.com).

- SLIPPERS Each pair of these slippershand dyed with indigo and sewn to order by Immodest Cottonfades over time like a great pair of jeans (\$295; fleabg.com).
- TABLECLOTH **AND NAPKINS** When you run your fingers over a Heather Taylor Home tablecloth or napkin set, you feel the handwork (\$82-\$258; heather taylorhome.com).
- **LAMPSHADES** Pleated cotton shades by Bunny Williams Home add a pop of pattern to any room (\$295 each; bunny williamshome.com).
- PITCHER This Zafferano vessel is made using Murano glassblowing techniques (\$125; zafferanoamerica.com).
- CANDLES No need for candlesticks: These beeswax candles by Carl Durkow pull double duty (\$32-\$40; newmar ketgoods.com).
- **WASTEBASKET** British designers Ben Pentreath and Bridie Hall based the pattern for this Pentreath & Hall mastehasket on historic tile (\$105; pentreath-hall.com).
- BASKET This basket from Dear Keaton deserves prominent placement (\$100; dearkeaton.com).
- GLASSES Refresh your bar with feather-

light glasses from Savannah's Courtland & Co. (\$40 each; courtland andco.com).

■ WATER CARBONATOR Unlike with an unwieldy waffle maker or air fryer, you'll actually want to leave this water

carbonator by Aarke out on the counter (\$229: aarke-usa.com).

- BOWL Texas artist Eliana Bernard makes this footed bowl to order (\$164; elianabernard.com).
- PILLOW The design on this new pillow from Australia's Utopia Goods is like catnip to lovers of pattern and coloralso known as Southerners (\$170; utopiagoods.com).
- COFFEE MAKER Java devotees with an eye for aesthetics will appreciate this high-performing metal, wood, and glass pour-over coffee maker by Ratio (\$495; ratio coffee.com).
- SILK PAJAMAS Fishing nets used in Kochi, India, inspired the print on these pajamas by the Ethical Silk Company (\$295; theethicalsilk company.com).
- PALM VASE All you need for instant drama is a palm frond and this vase from Jayson Home (\$32; jaysonhome.com).
- MORTAR AND **PESTLE** Tastemaker Thomas O'Brien has made a life of producing interesting objects, such as this square mortar and pestle (\$125; tobaero .com).

HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE



Clockwise from top:

- CLOCHE Willow wattles, tuteurs, and cloches such as this lovely support system from Master Garden Products lend structure to a garden (\$23 each; mastergarden products.com).
- WATERING CAN When the job calls for less of a soaking than a sprinkler or hose provides, tilt this sprightly, modern design by Hay (\$25; hay.com).
- BASKET Gather your heirloom varieties in this sturdy carryall by Terrain (\$68; shopterrain.com).

■ FLOWER SEEDS

The masterminds at California's Floret specialize in uncommon varieties of cutting flowers to start from seed, including the blushhued blooms in their Sweetheart mix (\$25; floretflowers.com).

- SHEARS The designer behind this tool from the Floral Society may have perfected ergonomic clippers for home gardeners (\$71; thefloralsociety.com).
- TOOLS Like a fetching pair of weathered boots, the leather handles of this tool set by Sol & Luna will break in beautifully (\$125; infavorof.com).
- **VEGETABLE** SEEDS Sow Row 7 seeds for vegetable varieties bred specifically for the palate, such as a badger flame beet that lacks the typical "dirt" aftertaste (\$3-\$5; row7seeds.com). G

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Puppy Trials

AMID A NEW PUP'S JUMPING, CHEWING, SHREDDING, AND ESCAPING, A FAMILY FIGURES OUT WHAT REALLY MATTERS

e didn't want another dog.

We being my wife and I. We'd lost our beloved yellow Lab Buddy the previous year and were still grieving, I suppose. Buddy-beautiful, superior, imperious Buddy-had been (locally) famous for eating a three-pound cheese ball and speaking in the voice of Darrell Hammond channeling Bill Clinton on Saturday Night Live, circa 1999 (we're

not the only ones who give our dog a voice, right?). But our children had been just, well, children when Buddy passed one August day. They were children still, but old enough to start demanding things. So when we moved from Florida back to our native Carolinas-trading sun and sand, which we loved, for mountains and rivers, which we knew and loved—we started looking (sort of) for a dog. It was a half-hearted search, punctuated by marathon sessions of viewing old Buddy photos (my wife and I were particularly susceptible to Buddy as a puppy: "Look at those paws! Look at those ears!"). But one day my sister called: Her hairdresser Tonya, a friend from high school, had a four-month-old labradoodle-English cream

golden retriever mix-a gorgeous happy dog, she told us. The only problem was that Tonya had to crate him all day while she was at work, and this gorgeous happy dog had outgrown his crate.

We drove down from our new home in Boone, North Carolina, to Clemson, South Carolina, the next weekend and met Tonya and her dog, whose name, it turned out, was Buddy. He was a giant-pawed puppy, sloppy and beautiful with wiry hair that gave him the appearance of some British royal turned out of Buckingham Palace for wetting the rugs. He already weighed thirty pounds. He was already licking my children's faces.

They fell in love.

We took him home.

End of story.

Or so we thought. We discovered, about three minutes after climbing into the car with him, he was an active dog. Make that an active puppy—a breed all its own. He climbed, licked, jumped. He was the sweetest, most loving thing ever. But he was in constant motion. Also, he chewed: That week he chewed up both my wife's passport and her eyeglasses. He chewed pillows and toys and plastictaken from the recycling bin. He chewed our fingers and TV remote. He chewed the soft L.L. Bean dog bed we'd gotten him.

"I'm too old for a puppy," my wife declared.

She was, in her defense, down on all fours squinting (without her glasses) and gathering the blue shards of her passport.

We decided a name change was in order. We'd already had a Buddy. We needed a clean start. We needed a name that signaled the regal dignity our new pup would grow into any day now. We needed a Basho. Yes! Basho, the Japanese Zen poet. An aspirational name indicating calmand focus.

Basho it was.

Only Basho (think stillness, think pu'er tea in the lotus position) quickly became Bash (as in his head against everything). Basho the poet might have achieved enlightenment, but Bash the dog was a wild man.

I was headed from my office to class the day my wife called.

"Guess who I just got off the phone with?" she asked. Then, before I could an-

swer: "The dogcatcher!"

"The what?"

"The dogcatcher."

"That's still a thing?"

Apparently, it is. We live at the dead end of a long gravel road, but it seems Basho had decided to go exploring. At the end of ourroad, across the highway, across a field, across practically the Watauga freaking River, Basho had discovered a house with chickens and, in his big goofy way, decided to play with them.

"Oh,he's just loving on them," my wife told the animal control officer (they aren't really called "dogcatchers" anymore). "He's actually really gentle."

"Well, gentle or not, he's about to love 'em to death, ma'am."

She drove over.

She and the animal control officer spent a half hour chasing Basho, who thought it was all a big game. Finally, they both managed to corral him.

He rolled onto his back to have his belly rubbed.

I like to think they laughed and cried.

I like to think they bonded.

A few days later we took him hiking for the first time. It was supposed to be an easy break-in: a walk along the gravel road that parallels the river. But as we were clipping the leash to his collar, Basho slipped beneath the gate of the car, dodged my wife, and galloped up the road. We gave chase on foot, and then gave up and gave chase in the car. Basho ran a half mile at twenty miles an hour—with a brief pause to surprise an old woman hanging out her wash—and then flopped into the weeds for yet another belly rub. My wife and I were a bit exasperated, but my son was simply impressed.

"Dad, Basho just easily broke the world record for eight hundred meters."

"But he is a quadruped," I pointed out.

 $\hbox{``And he doesn't listen,'' my wife added}.$

My son was unmoved.

He scratched Basho's big blond tummy.

"You're the sweetest and the fastest thing ever," he told him.

Which was sort of true, but not very helpful.

That week we decided to invest in an in-



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visible fence. None of us were crazy about the decision, but we couldn't face another encounter with the animal control officer. We got the sort of collar that emits a beeping sound as you approach the boundary before finally emitting a small shock. The children insisted I try it, so one Saturday morning I began walking apprehensively away from the house, the collar in my hand.

"It beeped," I told the children.

"Keep going," they told me back.

"It beeped again." And it had, louder and faster, as if detecting it was in the grasp of some middle-aged idiot.

"But Dad," my son said, "we need you to make sure it isn't too strong."

I wasn't keen on this.

"Butwon't Basho stop when he hears the beeping?" I asked. "This seems unnecessary."

"It's absolutely necessary," my son said.
"Just touch the electrodes and walk already," my daughter told me.

She said it with such seven-year-old authority that I did.

The collar beeped wildly. The shock

was no more than a prickle. We declared it harmless. The children wrapped Basho in celebratory hugs.

"Now you'll be safe with us forever," my daughter said.

Basho flopped on his back, got his belly rubbed, then promptly went inside and ate his new bed.

"I'm too old for a puppy!" I heard from the living room. It was my wife, picking up the stuffing. I sympathized, even if I sometimes wondered who among us was young enough for one.

The answer, it turns out, was our children.

The answer, it turns out, was all of us. We should have seen it coming.

How inevitable it was. How watching our son and daughter fall in love with a big sweet sloppy dog, we would fall in love with that same big sweet sloppy dog. My wife and I both kept talking about the travails of a giant puppy, but now and then I'd catch her whispering sweetly into Basho's floppy ear. Then one day, I discovered Basho channeling Darrell Hammond channeling Bill

Clinton, circa 1999 (we're not the only ones who give our dog a voice, *right*?). I discovered myself scratching his belly and asking all the things you ask of beloved dogs.

He was a good boy, yes, did he know how good a boy he was?

Basho, sprawled on his back, started telling me about Little Rock.

Did he know how sweet he was?

Apparently, since he was swishing his tail and talking about Chelsea and the Oslo Accords.

I was scratching and rubbing and talking so intently I barely noticed how still he was, or happy I was. The thing I did notice, the thing I felt, the thing I sensed between this goofy dog and this doting man, it wasn't calm or focus or any of the other things I'd hoped for.

It was something so much better. Let's call it love.

Mark Powell is the author of six novels, most recently Firebird, and directs the creative writing program at Appalachian State University.



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lifelong antique-firearms collector from Corpus Christi, Texas, peered down the barrel of a silverand-gold-inlaid Winchester Model 12 with a Monte

Carlo stock. He was making a last-minute pass through the gun-filled preview hall on day one of the Rock Island Auction Company's big September event in Rock Island, Illinois. Bidding was about to

"I learned to appreciate guns from my uncle, a carver of stocks who lived in Austin," the collector said, the gleam of nostalgia in his eye mirroring the glow of burled walnut. "My first gun was a Model 12," though nothing as fine as the exhibition-quality gem braced against his shoulder.

commence at the three-day firearms auction.

Like other auction-goers, the Texan started as a hunter, in his case shooting white-winged dove in the Rio Grande Valley near the border town of McAllen, Texas. He said he'd gotten older and his legs didn't

hold up like they used to, "but if you get out of the game, that's when they put you under the grass. Collecting firearms," he said, "keeps me in the game. What first captivated me was the

craftsmanship and beauty of the wood. I don't buy guns as much for shooting as works of art."

That's music to the ears of Rock Island Auction Company

president Kevin Hogan, who calls antique and rare firearms "the most underappreciated collectibles on the market." The thirty-one-year-old and his father, Patrick Hogan, who founded the firearms auction company twenty-five years ago, are on a mission to educate a new generation of collectors on the beauty, craft, and history of investment-class weapons.

Kevin Hogan has an expansive definition of *gun collector*. He says he meets countless guys who tell him they're shooters and bird hunters, not collectors. But then he'll ask how many guns they own, and they'll tell him six or seven. "Well, you're a gun collector," he says. "You just don't realize it yet."

Sometimes all it takes is a trip to one

of Rock Island Auction Company's live auctions to galvanize a wavering collector. The company holds five auctions each year at its 150,000-square-foot campus, located a mile from



the Mississippi River and eight miles south of Davenport, Iowa. The final event of the 2019 season is the upcoming Premier Auction, to be held December 6 through 8, during which the company will offer some three thousand rare and antique guns from more than a dozen top U.S. collections. Enthusiasts will undoubtedly arrive early for Thursday's pre-auction party—food, beer, live country-and-western music—and for the chance to don white gloves and handle the rare weapons. Many will be hauling dog-eared copies of the auction catalogue—hauling because the three-volume spiral-bound set weighs nearly ten pounds.

"We're proud of our catalogue. The photos of guns and historic documentation help you feel the emotion of the pieces," Hogan says. "But you really need to see these guns

in person."

If firearms reveal the history of the world, then history is on display in the Rock Island Auction Company preview hall. Even if you're not ready to drop big bucks on a firearm, Hogan says, you should still come see the guns of your dreams. It beats staring at a computer screen or pressing your face up against museum glass.

If you are in the market to buy, Hogan believes that "the best way to sell these national treasures, these true masterpieces, is the auction method." Handling historic guns builds trust. "We've built confidence among our collectors so that when we say it's the best of its class or it has a 95 percent finish, they believe us."

Rock Island doesn't merely hold an auction. "We build an auction," Hogan says. "We put thought into every decision we make." The team keeps things genre-specific, so bidders can come and go during the day. They spread out the most-anticipated lots to leave themselves and the bidders room to breathe. As anyone who has ever attended one of RIAC's live auctions will tell you, the room can really heat up. It's thrilling.

At the September Premier Auction, Hogan was brimming with energy as he prepared to introduce lot #1, an 1894 Marlin lever-action rifle. Soon he was off to the races. The hall buzzed with bidders. around 150 in all, along with staff members manning a bank of phones and computer screens. Rather than bang a gavel, the thick-bearded Hogan closed each bid by belting out, "Last call, fair warning, last call and fair warning-sold to bidder number...." After twenty-five lots, he handed the microphone like a relay baton to his father, one of five other auctioneers rotating in and out of the lineup, and the elder Hogan loped along at the same rate-around two lots per minute. They wouldn't

stop for eight more hours. And that

was just day one.

The pace in the auction hall was dizzying, intensified by the occasional bidding war. At one point, bids for a rare 1847 Colt Walker pistol skyrocketed into the six figures and were soon stairstepping in \$50,000 increments. The air in the room grew electric as the pauses between bids stretched to the breaking point. Several times in a row, just as Hogan announced "last call, fair warning," a bidder would raise his numbered green card, pushing the price ever higher until it topped out at an astounding \$1,035,000.

The guns may be the main attraction, but Kevin Hogan and his father are gracious hosts. "Our auction weekend is a total experience," says the younger Hogan. "We make it fun. We've built a culture of gun collectors who mark our auction dates in their calendars. They come to Rock Island for the sense of community."

After the September auction's opening night, the Hogans hosted a steak dinner for a few dozen auction regulars. "In terms of selection, price, quality, and presentation, Rock Island's auctions are on a scale like nothing I've ever seen before," one frequent attendee said while sipping a

predinner whiskey. "Trust is key in this business, and these guys run a first-class operation."

Another collector from Mississippi explained the draw of antique firearms. "I grew up in Natchez, where I was surrounded by old buildings and antiques," he said. "In a place like that you almost can't help but develop an interest in fine old things."

The Rock Island Auction Company has come along way in the past two and a half decades. After starting humbly in a 1,200-square-foot garage, the auction has grown so much it's now stretching the limits of its current space. What accounts for the growth? A lot goes back to Kevin Hogan's belief

that the market for investment-class firearms was and still is undervalued. Three decades ago, the British auction house Sotheby's made news when it sold a Winchester rifle for a record \$32,000. Last year, RIAC sold a rare 1847 Colt single action revolver for \$1.8 million, setting a new record for highest price paid for a single firearm.

If Rock Island's recent auctions are any indication, the explosion in interest is far from over.

Opposite: A large crowd attends the September 6–8 Premier Auction. The phone bank is designed to seat thirty phone bidders representing buyers from all over the world. It is not uncommon for another eight to twelve phone bidders to be set up on the opposite side of the room to accommodate the additional phone bids being submitted in real time. This page: The historic John Ulrich engraved and gold-inlaid Winchester Model 1895 rifle, presented to famed Western author Zane Grey, sold for \$345,000.



BY JULIA REED

Out to Pasture

IN DEFENSE OF THE HONORABLE ASS

hen I was a child in the declining days of the solidly segregationist South, when Jim Eastland was still a Mississippi senator and Herman Talmadge was his Georgia counterpart and George Wallace was governor of Alabama (the list of similar, ahem, "statesmen" goes on and on-and on), there was an extremely popular license plate containing the message "Keep your heart [with

an image of a splashy red heart subbing for the word] in Dixie, or get your ass [garish illustration of donkey's behind] out!"

Now, I hated that thing even before I was old enough to grasp the offensiveness of its meaning, primarily on aesthetic grounds. It was super tacky, and I knew the noble donkey (otherwise known as Equus asinus and already among my very favorite animals) did not deserve to be used in such a way. But the long-suffering ass, which was first domesticated around 3000 BC and has been used as a working animal ever since, is a beast of burden that has borne far more than its share. I recall an image of Talmadge, the staunch segregationist governor and senator whose Georgia reign lasted from 1948 to 1981, rather stiffly wearing a suit and tie



THEHIGH & THELOW

astride a donkey. He was finally banished from political life after his second wife, Betty, testified against him during a Senate investigation into a financial scandal in which he was found to have accepted substantial reimbursements for official expenses not actually incurred. Betty, whom he had married when she was eighteen, was not Herman's hugest fan. When they divorced, she accused him of "cruel treatment" and "habitual intoxication," but in apparently happier times, as First Lady of Georgia, she and Herman hosted lavish parties at their plantation in Lovejoy, where Betty was an enthusiastic slaughterer of pigs. Upon arrival, guests were greeted by soldiers in Confederate

gray, Dixieland banjo players, and a pet donkey named Assley Wilkes. Take your pick about which is the most odious, but I'm going with Asslev. I felt the same way about his namesake the simpering Mr. Wilkes as my man Rhett Butler did. No self-respecting animal deserves that moniker, especially not in that hideously cutesy version.

Donkeys have also been consistently derided as stupid and stubborn. Not so. They are, rather, intelligent and cautious, possessed of a healthy sense of self-preservationtheir big, thoroughly adorable ears afford them excellent hearing so they are aware of dangerway ahead of most creatures. Their so-called stub-

bornness, then, turns out to be an asset, a fact Andrew Jackson was smart enough to capitalize on. During the 1828 presidential campaign, supporters of John Quincy Adams called him a "jackass." Jackson ran with the comparison, putting donkeys on campaign posters and highlighting his "stubborn" nature as a weapon in his battle against corruption and elitism. By the 1880s, with the help of the political cartoonist Thomas Nast, the donkey had become the unofficial symbol of the Democratic party.

The Scots, who know a thing or two about a lot of things (including my favorite whiskey in all the world), are smart enough to use donkeys in Scottish heraldry as symbols of humility and patience. Exact-

ly. And let's not forget Christ his own self riding into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday in "lowly pomp" astride the humble beast. How could anyone gaze into those liquid brown eyes and not immediately recognize the donkey's finer qualities? When I was on my first African safari, our group decided to choose what today would be dubbed our "spirit animal." I chose the antelope because I felt such empathy, as though the creatures could look inside me and read my very soul. On home ground, it's a donkey, hands down. For the last ten years or so, I've passed a seed barn in Chatham, Mississippi, where two donkeys and a black-and-white paint horse are kept. Recently, I've been making the trek

> on purpose, armed with bags of carrots and apples just to

.....

I'll keep visiting my pals, but now I realize I could avoid the twenty-five-minute drive and install some of my own four-legged friends in the pasture across the gravel road from my new house in the Delta. I will have to rent or buy the space, but it will be worth it to wake up to the sight of my beloved donkeys, the odd horse, and a handful of mules (the offspring of the first two). I may even indulge in a long-held fantasy about freeing the sweet but miserable mules that pull carriages of overweight tourists around New Orleans' French Quarter in the hot sun. They suffer such

indignities as wearing plastic "straw" hats festooned with flowers while listening to the driver/"guides" get pretty much every piece of New Orleans history wrong. Once, while residing on the lower end of Bourbon Street, I went out to get my mail only to find a self-liberated mule on the run, cheered on by the gathering crowds on the sidewalk. He was hauling ass (an extremely useful description, and here, only a half bad pun), his harness sending up sparks as it scraped the pavement. It was a hell of a sight, and while I prayed he'd make it to safety in a field somewhere on the other side of the levee, I feel sure he was caught and pressed back into his dismal duty.

So, the pasture it is then. I will free some

mules, buy a horse, collect some gorgeous long-lashed donkeys. I'll make like the St. Francis of the Mississippi Delta, though since I can't quite pull off the saint part, perhaps I'll go with Lady Julia of Asinus. Anyway, I've a history with this particular piece of land that goes way back. Our neighbor Mr. Smith, who owned what were then hundreds of acres of pastures and fields surrounding the house I grew up in (behind which my current house stands), kept some cows and a big old bull back there, Since Mr. Smith was not so good at maintaining his fences, the bull escaped into our backyard, walked out onto the flat swimming pool cover, and promptly fell through it. It was three days before he allowed himself to be led up the steps at the shallow end, which, it must be said, demonstrates no small amount of stubbornness. But you know, he was traumatized. Several years later in the same pasture, I kept a horse named Hi Joe, who, when I was not riding him, did duty as a literal shoulder to cry on. In the winter I'd bundle up and lie down on top of him in the barn, weeping into his mane over various heartaches and reading novels that underscored my maudlin drama. Joe, a docile creature, did not seem to mind, and until I went off to boarding school and we put him out to pasture for good, he was my closest companion.

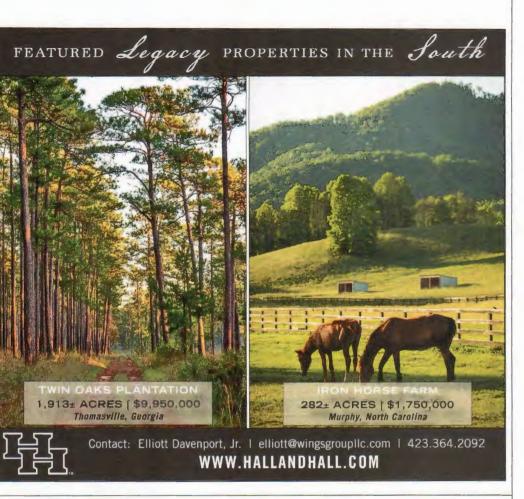
Unlike my late first cousin Frances, who was an accomplished rider, competing at Wellington well into her forties, I was not a serious horsewoman. When we were little, my grandmother bought Frances a fine chestnut pony named Key Biscayne, while I rode my riding teacher's fat white pony, Mary Poppins. The pony and I won a few ribbons in our country horse shows, and I adored my teacher, Sue Chick, who later graduated me to a dappled gray horse named London Fog. But perhaps my greatest triumph was my first-place win as Lady Godiva in the costume class astride Mary Poppins. My mother outfitted me in a flesh-colored leotard, and I sported a waist-length ponytail made from at least a dozen blond Dynel falls purchased at Morgan & Lindsey, the local dime store. This piece of maternal ingenuity puts me in mind of the time Mama pinned Frances's and my matching Florence Eiseman dresses together at the hip and sent us off to a costume party as Siamese twins (an event I've written about in more detail in



I'LL MAKE LIKE THE ST. FRANCIS **OF THE MISSISSIPPI** DELTA, THOUGH SINCE I CAN'T **QUITE PULL OFF THE** SAINT PART, **PERHAPS** I'LL GO WITH LADY JULIA **OF ASINUS**







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this space previously). It never occurred to me how weird that might have been until I proudly told a friend of mine about it just a few weeks ago and he gave me a look that can best be described as What??? And I hadn't even told him about impersonating a naked English noblewoman at

As usual, I digress. Let us return to my dear friends the donkeys. They are even useful when they don't carry packs in third-world countries. While they may not deserve it, their name has provided some of the greatest and most varied epithets of our time, especially when paired with such words as hat and, well...there are a lot. The insane Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez once said to George W. Bush, "You are a donkey, Mr. Danger," but horses are not spared either. As Secretary of State Dean Acheson once said of Lyndon Johnson, "A real centaur: part man, part horse's ass!" One of the countless funny lines uttered by my friend the inimitable Howard Brent involves a horse, but the behind in question is his own. "That horse threw me up so high, birds were building a nest in my ass before I even hit the ground." And then there are the mules, also erroneouslytagged as stubborn—among their many exceptional qualities are hardiness and longevity. There's a passage in Andrew Lytle's short story "Jericho, Jericho, Jericho" in which one of the characters insults the protagonist's fiancée, who comes from the "new" industrial city of Birmingham rather than the fine old agrarian South. "Birmingham," says Miss Kate, "I've got a mule older'n Birmingham."

But back to my pastoral-or pastural-pursuits. I might actually ride my new horse, in a wholesome, healthy way, fully clothed in jodhpurs or breeches and posting properly up and down or galloping along the levee. I have photos of my last riding expedition about twenty years ago and most involve my friends atop their mounts, putting on lipstick and drinking beer. There's one of me passing my lit Marlboro to a fellow rider so she could light her own. The actual riding part is a tad hazy. But the donkeys' mere presence will change all that. I'll gaze at them and get all centered and Zen and ride the horse and feel good about the rescued mules. In this particular case, my asinine plan feels like the opposite of what that adjective usually implies. I can't wait. G





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RILORIDA ROUNI)

Tubina in a spring along the Santa Fe River

The spirit of Old Florida endures—come along as we crack stone crabs with Rick Bragg, cruise back in time down the St. Johns River, and explore more than two dozen hidden gems, from the Panhandle to the Keys

PHOTOGRAPH BY GATELY WILLIAMS

A lifetime of memories of shell hunting in Panama City Beach and eating stone crabs in Siesta Key keeps onetime local Rick Bragg longing to return

e had just three nights and four days in the Castaway Cottages, not near enough time in paradise if you consider the six-hundred-mile round trip to Panama City from northeast Alabama, getting lost twice in Montgomery, and the motoring power of a six-cylinder '62 Chevrolet Biscayne. By the time we got there, we were just turning around.

My mother, aunt, two brothers, grandma, cousin, and a dog named Barnabas all squeezed into a two-bedroom apartment with a pool in the parking lot and a black-and-white TV with a slow horizontal roll, and it was still about the most fun we ever had. We tumbled down dunes and got sand in our ears, and caught a crab in a bucket, and saw a dolphin, honest to God. We played miniature golf in a garden of cement dinosaurs, and would have had a beer-smoked hot dog at a joint called Lum's, but figured it was probably a sin.

But who would ever believe me up there in the red dirt where we started out, with just some cold fried chicken and tomato sandwiches and a frozen Clorox jug of drinking water? Who would believe these dunes and emerald water, if I couldn't bring a piece or two of Florida home with me? They would say I had just been to Leesburg, and got my glowing sunburn on the muddy Coosa backwater.

Then, on our last day, I stood in front of a giant, blinking sign that screamed SOUVENIRS!!! And I knew I was saved. The parking lot was so hot it stuck to the bottoms of my dime-store flipflops, but looking back, it seemed as if I were about to enter Disney World, or what Disney World would be one day, when they drained enough swamp and got around to it. The store was as big as Walmart.

It was the summer of '69. I had a handful of damp white sand in one pocket of my cutoff jeans, clumped around a dozen perfect shells I culled from a million lesser ones on beautiful Panama City Beach. In the other pocket I had three wet, crumpled dollar bills, which meant I could afford almost anything in that place. They didn't mind at all that the money in my pockets was wet; the whole economy of coastal Florida would come tumbling down if they had to wait on money to dry.

I cannot remember the souvenir shop's name, but it was just like the one in Destin, and in Pensacola, and in Daytona, and in Cocoa Beach, and, well, any place where blue-green water and glimmering asphalt were held apart by hurricane-whipped palms, iridescent green Putt-Putt carpets, and restaurants that promised the best scampi or mullet or daiguiris in Florida. But I was ten years old then, and I didn't believe there was another place like it on this earth. I had not yet seen the rest of this dangling participle of a state, this wonderland, and to me this was Florida, a treasure trove of Budweiser beach towels,

Styrofoam floats, leaky beach balls, and bottomless bowls of pinkie rings carved from abalone shell.

There were also hermit crabs painted with tiny flags, baby hammerheads and octopuses in bubbles of what seemed to be formaldehyde, and sand dollars, sea biscuits, and sharks' teeth strung on leather cords, the coolest things I had ever seen. There were puka shell chokers, ceramic dolphins mounted on clumps of coral, shellacked turtle shells, grapefruit spoons, chocolate-coated piña colada candy, Grateful Dead and Harley-Davidson do-rags, monkey heads carved out of coconuts, starfish, and an impressive array of conch shells, so you could always hear the Gulf of Mexico, even three hundred miles away. I could buy a miniature outhouse carved out of cedar, a desiccated piranha, an alligator foot key chain, a tiny Spanish galleon with matchstick masts, and a muscle shirt that identified me as LIFEGUARD, or CAPTAIN, or just BIKINI INSPECTOR.

But what grabbed me, what puzzled me, mostly, was a snow globe, in a place where the car hoods radiated enough heat on a summer day to send you to the emergency room. But I guess they were popular, because there was only one left. I picked it up and shook it, and watched the tiny plastic snowflakes drift down onto a tiny plastic beach with a single tiny plastic palm. And I thought how silly it was. That's not what Florida is. And I set it down and bought a shark's tooth on a string and a rubber alligator; that's what Florida is. I would spend a good lifetime discovering the rest, a kind of perpetual tourist in the state, on vacation even when I lived there, because the place just does that to you, somehow-just kind of frees you, even in a crawling

Maybe it's the palms, or the aquamarine water, or the sand, or how they all come together to make something that not even a century of concrete, climbing ever higher and wider, can ruin.

h, Old Florida took its hits. We used to eat good grilled amberjack and fried shrimp and stuffed crab at a place on Destin Harbor, till a hurricane wiped it from the landscape. In the reincarnation of the place, the hostess makes you swap your car keys for one of those blinking, buzzing pagers, as you wait in a perpetual line. It broke my heart, and it set me thinking about all that is gone and will never be again, and what is left and seems as if it always will be. I would like to see it all again, at least once, before I go off on a package tour to the Hereafter. Since I fear that will be someplace sparky and smoky, I think I would like to begin by bobbing in the water at least one more time.

I made my home in the best bobbing place on earth, as a young man, on skinny Anna Maria Island off of Bradenton and Sarasota, where you were only ever a block off the water in just about any direction. There, I lived on grouper sandwiches and piña coladas at the Sandbar Restaurant on the Gulf of Mexico. I

remember pine needles in the white sand, and watching squadrons of brown pelicans hunt for fish in the flats of Tampa Bay. Nothing is prettier, at a distance; I've known people that way.

I used to take a swim every day at twilight in the turquoise water near Bean Point, and watched it fade slowly into an inky dark pool. I was told the bull sharks fed at dusk, so I hid among a senior citizens' exercise group. I am not proud of it, but now that I am old enough not to stand out quite so much, I would do it again if I had a chance. On the weekends I fished the same flats the pelicans did, and watched a hammerhead as long as the boat glide underneath, in water as clear as a mountain spring and three feet deep. I could see myself living there forever, see myself as an old manin a chair under a palm tree, how he would one day think he might retire soon, thought hat might just mean changing chairs.

Maybe, someday, I will do that, still.

Miami left a different impression. There, I always kind of felt that, if I ever stopped moving, a civil uprising from a conflict across the sea would just pull me into it, somehow, and I would be seen waving a placard or maybe a pistol. I don't know; maybe it was just the Cuban coffee. I lived there for years and always feltlike I was on the edge of something else, something greater and maybe just a bit dangerous, a weird and pleasant unease, if such a thing is possible. A hunk of concrete hit me in the head there one day, but the closest I ever came to dying was when I consumed too many croquetas de jamón.

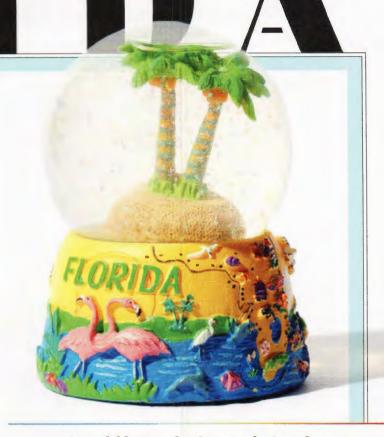
I was there when Hurricane Andrew blew in, in a little house in Coconut Grove; I rolled up in a futon to ride it out, with a café con leche and a Cuban sandwich and a bag full of Haitian macaroons. On a second tour of Miami I bought a house in Coral Gables, not far from the iconic Biltmore Hotel: I saw a crab, once. backstroking through the swimming pool, and I went to have lunch under an explosion of orchids to think about it.

I remember driving across the Glades and counting alligators, just lined up there, dozing; remember falling out of the boat on an alligator hunt in Lake Okeechobee on a night thick with raindrops and mosquitoes and glowing, orange eyes. I remember going to do a story on the saltwater crocodiles at Turkey Point, and seeing one, a massive female, beside the boat, big enough to eat that hammerhead in Tampa Bay, if she was inclined. I held a baby one in my hand; it felt like a boot.

I remember it was the last time I had a cat, a stray who lurked for lizards in the banyan trees, and I remember thinking how he could not have lived anywhere else; he was specific to this place.

Iremember a burning Haitian rum called Barbancourt, but I do not remember it very well. And I remember bribing the front man at Joe's Stone Crab, or trying to, till I realized that a twentydollar bill will not get you a seat one damn bit sooner. I got old, waiting on a plate of those claws.

But mostly I remember how I could go get some black beans and rice and tres leches at Versailles restaurant, and listen to people for whom revolution was not a feeling, but a memory. It may be I am too old for South Florida now, too old to stand on the edge of anything, lest I lose my balance and tumble off. Still, I go back every chance I get, tempting fate, one croqueta at a time.



I could buy a desiccated piranha, an alligator foot key chain, a tiny Spanish galleon with matchstick masts, and a muscle shirt that identified me as

LIFEGUARD, or CAPTAIN, or just BIKINI INSPECTOR

Maybe I should stick to the west coast, where there seemed to be fewer high rollers. I sat on a dock most of one afternoon off Siesta Key, next to a one-eyed dolphin. I think his name was Sam. Then I went in and got me stone crabs, and I do not believe Ibribed a soul. I'd like to go back there, but I reckon Sam is gone.

One memory rides easy, even easier than most. I was working down on Anna Maria in...well, I cannot recall, around '91 or so, and a cold wave had penetrated deep into the state, killing the orange trees. I had to call my mother and tell her I would not be home for the holidays. The interstate was iced over, as far down as southern Georgia. I was, quite truly, marooned on an island.

The temperature dropped freakishly low, and I walked out to the beach, with nothing better to do. And I saw snow falling on the white sand, and on the fronds of a palm tree, and into the Gulf of Mexico, and I stood there a long time, shivering.

I remember thinking that, even after so much time, I still didn't know what Florida was.

I guess I still don't, but if I ever see another snow globe like that again, I will buy it, and set it on a shelf. You never know where this life will lead you, and one day it may lead me far, far from a beach.



Watching the moonrise while anchored on the St. Johns River just off Lungren Island.

IN TIME

To find the primeval heart of Florida, take a voyage down the St. Johns

by John Huey

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PETER FRANK EDWARDS



"Like the emotional desperadoes who came—who still come—to Florida seeking a geographic cure for their past, this river has a complicated persona."

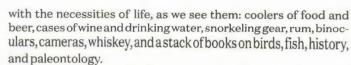
-Bill Belleville, River of Lakes: A Journey on Florida's St. Johns River

So that's what we are? Emotional desperadoes? Clearly we are seeking a geographic cure for something out here. Why else would we be on this remote blackwater river, churning along at five miles an hour, overwhelmed by the exotic flora and fauna—and the deep history—that engulf us? Below: alligators, turtles, snakes, manatees, shellcrackers. Above: herons, egrets, eagles, kites, and, in the words of one crew member, "more ospreys than pigeons at the Varsity."

Aiming to see as much of the St. Johns River as we can in a week, my crew and I had gathered on a brilliant May afternoon at a marina on Lake Monroe in downtown Sanford, Florida. Close by is the

spot where the last paddle wheeler, once a ubiquitous craft on the river, concluded its final voyage in 1929. Our vessel is not a steamboat, but the fifty-five-foot houseboat *Southern Belle*—provided, outfitted, and delivered by our new friends downriver at Holly Bluff Marina in DeLand.

Whatever houseboats lack in handling ease or élan, they are ideal for excursions like ours. The river and its string of lakes, creeks, and canals can become suddenly and treacherously shallow, and these boats draw very little water. The dearth of civilization on our route-no grocery stores, drugstores, or liquor stores, and few restaurants-requires a self-sustaining vessel, and the Belle's accommodations are capacious. Her open bow is a railed deck with a dining table, a gas grill, a ceiling fan, and comfy chairs. Just inside sliding glass doors is a big open room that includes the helm station, a living room, and a fully equipped galley with a real refrigerator, a four-top stove, a microwave, a TV, and a sink. Beyond that are three staterooms and two heads, each with a comfortable shower. We have stuffed this floating box



Four kayaks are stacked on our stern, and behind us we trail a sixteen-foot aluminum skiff with a twenty-five-horse outboard. Up top is a deck big enough to hold a dance on, with lounge chairs, another steering station, and a Bimini top.

Call me captain. My wife, Kate, is navigator. Two friends from my college days complete the crew: Susan—blessed with an encyclopedic recall of birds, plants, and fish—is our naturalist. Her husband, Don, is first mate and mixologist—enormously handy, coolheaded, and patient.

Each of us has our own reasons for signing on. For me, the promise of Florida has provoked my imagination since I was a boy growing up in Georgia. Annual cartrips down there were as close as my family ever came to exotic. Susan and Don live in old coastal Florida, and are drawn to both nature and indigenous history. Then there's Kate, one of that rare breed, the native Floridian who grew up near here in small-town Central Florida. Her family photo albums shout Old Florida—filled with gators and fish and boats. A piquant memory from early in our relationship stars a brother-in-law of hers arriving for Thanksgiving dinner by airboat.

One family photo in particular hangs heaviest over me. Young Kate and her brother and sister on the stern of an old Danish wooden sailboat that had been refashioned into a thirty-eight-foot houseboat bearing the name *All Hours*. I have been hearing about the family adventures aboard this boat in and around the St. Johns for more than thirty years. Can this retro adventure possibly live up to her memories and expectations? Is there really anything left of Old Florida, or are we on a ghost mission?

he St. Johns was the first great river in North America explored by Europeans—in the 1500s, almost 250 years before Lewis and Clark went west—and for a long time it was the only route into the mysterious interior of La Florida. At 310 miles, it is the state's longest river and one of the few major waterways on the continent to flow north. Promoted as the "Nile of America," it became Florida's first tourist attraction, drawing curious vacationers from the 1870s well into the 1920s.

The author Bill Belleville, whose elegiac book traces his journey from the vague headwaters of the river—in a swamp west of Vero Beach—north until it flows into the Atlantic just above Jackson ville, captures the glory of that era:

Steamships, which first hauled cargo up and down the river for early settlers and rugged frontiersmen in the 1830s, became larger and fancier, accommodating visitors lured by blue sky dreams here in the land of flowers. These archetypal snowbirds descended on the swampy peninsula in a mad quest for health, wealth, and adventure, riding the "highway" of the St. Johns each winter into the heart of known Florida, like today's snowbirds ride Interstate 95 and the Florida Turnpike.

Travelers cruised south from Jacksonville, dining and sleeping on the steamboats, then staying longer in the luxury hotels and boardinghouses that sprang up along the riverside. They fished the blackwater lakes and swam in the clear artesian springs that feed the river. Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee both visited. Grover Cleveland was here. Winslow Homer painted here, the poet Sidney Lanier wrote a guidebook that included the river, and Harriet Beecher Stowe settled into a winter home on the St. Johns.

The St. Johns is now classified as an American Heritage River,



and the navigable portion of it we are on is the forgotten artery that flows just east of the elevated "ridge" dividing a stretch of the Florida peninsula lengthwise. For much of the way, it winds through a semiprotected corridor, roughly twenty miles wide, that includes the Ocala National Forest, a series of state parks, and various government preserves. This narrow terrarium sustains a wildly diverse ecosystem with hundreds of unusual plant and animal species, and the river is dotted with the pre-Columbian ruins and middens of the Timucua, and some remnants of Seminole and other indigenous tribes. Today, one scientist says, the St. Johns is an "unseen river."

ueled and stocked, we chug north out of Lake Monroe, crossing under three bridges, including the noisy Interstate 4 span, a main artery to Disney World, barely fifty miles away. Now we are in the river, snaking along a narrow stretch of rich tannic water the color of tea, lined on both sides with thick forest-giant sabal palm, live oak, cypress, magnolia, draped and dotted with ferns, bromeliads, trumpet vines, orchids. The air is crisp and aromatic. Very little development shows along the way, mostly small fading fish camps or waterside motels, remnants of the postcardera. The river and its banks are remarkably free of the usual human litter. We see few other boats.

Everyone, I sense, shares my excitement-glee really-to find ourselves on a boat in this patch of jungle (which, I point out, is where Johnny Weissmuller swung through the trees in the filming of those old Tarzan movies). The reality of contemporary Florida, so nearby, is slipping off us like skin off molting snakes. We aren't just random twenty-first-century sojourners on some boattrip. We are time travelers in search of various pasts, afloat on a raft headed north, which is down, the St. Johns River.

Romance aside, driving this sled turns out to be a real bear. I say that as a reasonably experienced mariner who spends a lot of time driving a variety of boats in tidal conditions. But this is different. You don't steer a fifty-five-foot box with no skeg or keel underneath, and a superstructure sticking twenty-two feet into the air, so much as try to suggest where it might go. There is no sweet spot where you can just aim and let it run on course. Guiding it is a constant process of turning it one way, then quickly adjusting in the other direction before it actually goes the first way. If you want to turn left way ahead, you need to start right here—or maybe back there.

Our first overnight destination is a little dot of land called Guava Island, lying to one side of Emanuel Bend, a curve in the river. Our objective is to maneuver this beast into a notch on the riverbank, where my deckhands (Don and Kate) can leap off and wrap lines around two trees to hold the boat fast to the bank. But a wind has kicked up behind us, overriding my efforts at the helm. Our first pass does not go well. The Bimini jousts with a tree limb and loses. It's a noisy tussle that gets all our adrenaline pumping. After a couple of passes, we manage to secure the boat to the island with no damage we can't fix.

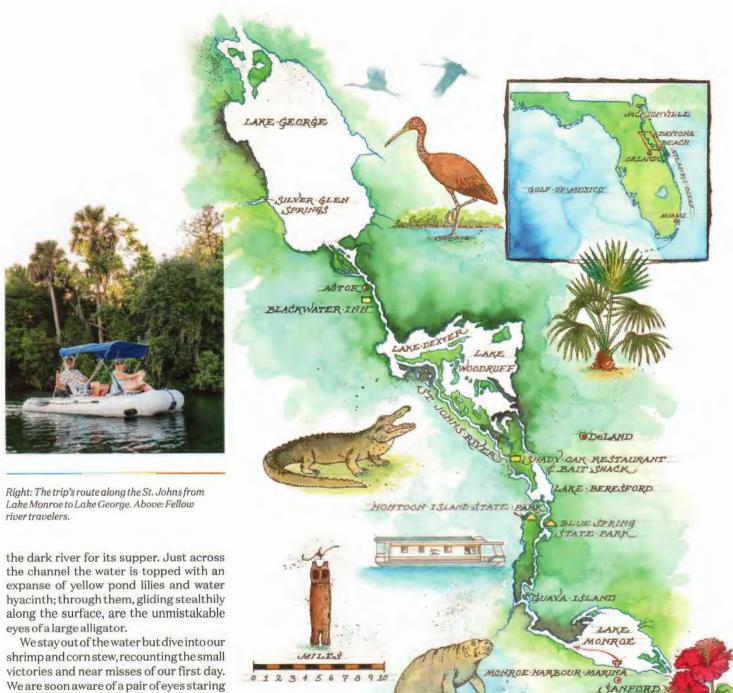
Our new home for the night is a small hammock of trees and vines. We double-check our lines and knots, then exchange sighs of-if not exactly accomplishment-relief all around. Don, fresh from a semi-Herculean tie-up effort, puts glasses into everyone's hands. They are filled with what will be the house drink for the duration of our journey: margaritas, exquisite in their simplicity, which he has handcrafted and lugged along by the gallons. That first one, that first night, may have been the most welcome cocktail I have ever been handed.

Ashore, we spot the shells of the huge apple snails that are the favorite food of the river's most distinctive bird-the limpkin (a crane relative), whose eerie, screeching cry is like no other. Off our stern, a great blue heron stands atop the channel marker, scanning





Above: Mullet school near Silver Glen Springs; the Southern Belle at anchor. Opposite, from top: The crew gathers before hitting the water; exploring by kayak; a nest of ospreys along the St. Johns.



We stay out of the water but dive into our shrimp and corn stew, recounting the small victories and near misses of our first day. We are soon aware of a pair of eyes staring right at us from just twenty feet away. It is a giant, aristocratic barred owl, settled into the brackets of a sabal palm, unbothered by our presence. "Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you-all?" it asks into the night.

The Blue Flower full moon is two nights away, but the night sky is well lit and sparkling as we adjourn to the roof deck to take it all in. Frogs, crickets, screeching victims of the night, all ring out in a strangely soothing cacophony. The air is unusually cool, and we have shut down the AC and the generator. The mosquitoes and no-see-ums have taken the night off. It is a damned fine evening for settling in and seeking a little inspiration from one of the Bartram books I have brought along.

America's first great nature philosopher, John Bartram set out on the St. Johns in 1765 as the king's botanist (George III of England), traveling for several months with his son "Billy" Bartram and three others (one an enslaved man) in a flat-bottomed bateau.

On a later trip around the South, the younger Bartram wrote his classic *Travels*, with descriptions of the St. Johns that have influenced all comers since, including John James Audubon and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who never came here but borrowed from Billy's work in crafting "Kubla Khan."

p early the next morning, we press farther downriver away from civilization. The river and the boat are both lazy, so there's plenty of time for taking in the vast array of wildlife. Since Susan is the naturalist, her job is to station herself with binoculars and reference books and point out every living thing we might otherwise miss.

Here is her log entry from our first full day:

This morning: purple gallinule perched across the creek in the sunlight. Underway: ospreys carrying large fish, and others standing on numerous low nests. Pileated woodpecker. Sandhill cranes with chicks out across a marsh. Young limpkins. Little blue herons. Snowy egrets. Red-shouldered hawks. Swallow-tailed kites. Black vultures. Alligators of all sizes. Red-bellied turtles sunning on logs. Carolina wrens.

Settled into the routine of the boat, we approach our next stop: Blue Spring State Park, our first freshwater spring, which bills itself as the real Florida.

I'm not sure exactly what to expect at Blue Spring, but here's what Billy Bartram saw on his visit in 1766:

Avast fountain of...mineral water, which issued from a high ridge or bank on the river, in a great cove or bay...it boils up with great force, forming immediately a vast circular bason...and here are continually a prodigious number of fish; they appear as plain as though lying on a table before your eyes, although many feet deep in the water.

We beach the Belle at the park and disembark with our snorkeling gear and some sporty inner tubes. We drop our two-dollar fees into the honor box. Today's Blue Spring remains magnificent. Each day it gushes out 102 million gallons of fresh, clear rainwater that has been trapped for thousands of years far below the earth's surface. The largest spring on the entire St. Johns, it is the winter home of some four hundred West Indian manatees. These giant doughfaced mammals, which average twelve hundred pounds and ten feet in length (sometimes reaching three thousand pounds), migrate here in winter for the year-round water temperature of seventytwo degrees, four degrees above the lowest they can tolerate.

Whether this is a sound environmental idea or not, visitors are allowed to swim into the boil, then float down the creek. We hop right in and are surrounded by all manner of fish: Florida gar, alligator gar, longnose gar—all look like they swam out of a dinosaur book. We see a wide variety of sunfish-redears, redbreasts, bluegills-along with massive blue catfish. Thousands of gambusias, or mosquito fish—the first aquarium fish sold in America—swarm the waters. And the invasive party crashers giant tilapia prowl here too. Above the mouth of the boil, serious free divers in wet suits, GoPros strapped to their foreheads, disappear into the cave entrance from which the water pushes out. We take a more leisurely approach, snorkeling and tubing down the lazy creek.

We were warned we might be too late in the season for the manatees, but they are right here in the spring with us. At one point, several of the beasts swim right under my tube, which I hang over, gawking at them through my mask. Belleville notes that when you make eye contact with manatees, they appear as humans in manatee suits, then he goes on to wonder if we appear to them as manatees wearing human suits. I hope so.

The crowd around the spring is sizable but not overwhelming, and wonderfully diverse: Old and young. White and black and brown and vellow. American and European and Asian and Latin American. We are all drawn here by the same magnet that attract-

Below, left to right: The Blackwater Inn on the waterfront in Astor; catfish and frog legs at Shady Oak Restaurant.









Above: Identifying the area's raptors; taking a dip at Silver Glen Springs. Opposite: A lone island; navigating an oxbow on the river.

ed humans from the Native Americans forward: the magic of the spring and its inhabitants. Adults ooh and aah at the manatees, children squeal and laugh at the strange-looking fish and frolic with abandon in the see-through water. At one point, I come upon Kate in her tube, holding on to a tree limb, eyes closed with a big smile on her face. When I ask why she isn't snorkeling, she responds, "I'm just listening to all the sounds of the park. There's so much joy here."

Soon after that, back on the bank, she is reminded that this really is Old Florida when she spots a bona fide coral snake (deadly) slithering near a park picnic table. We delegate that issue to the authorities and reboard the *Southern Belle* in search of a tranquil spot to settle in for the weekend. With guidance from rangers, we don't go far, just across the St. Johns from Blue Spring into a placid creek. Here we tie up to a big black walnut and a white ash in woods on the lower end of Hontoon Island State Park—itself a major attraction for its wilderness beauty and indigenous artifacts.

With the sun lowering, we slide into our kayaks to explore the creek and the surrounding marshes. The sounds of frogs and woodpeckers and screeching limpkins float over us, and we are never out of sight of an alligator or three sharing the water with us. Gathered back at the boat, we fire up the grill and observe the show that surrounds us.

Susan's log entry:

Friday cocktail hour, rosé wine, entertained by a sweet-faced limp-kin that became our camp mate—then went on the hunt, submerging its whole head digging for apple snails and freshwater mussels. Big snail found, limpkin carried it to the bank, hammered with its beak, and feasted on lumps of escargot.

Billy Bartram, who drew a limpkin, was especially taken with what he called the "crying bird." His illustration survives, but as the editor Thomas Hallock notes in his edition of Bartram's *Travels on the St. Johns River*:

...the crude engraving fails to capture the limpkin's gangly, doe-like grace. But the illustration does connect us. The same bird...is still found on the St. Johns. Readers of *Travels* who see a limpkin in the wild hold a special kinship to William Bartram. His presence cuts across centuries.

For ustime travelers, our "Night of the Limpkin" does just that, pushing us deeper into a slower, unplugged routine, more connected to all the sights and sounds and smells of the nonhuman life around us. Unlike, say, the Colorado River, the St. Johns doesn't overwhelm you so much as envelop you. It is subtle, but powerful.

The night sky, as seen unobstructed from our roof deck, is a mesmerizing daily reminder of our place on the planet. Saturday brings the big show—the Blue Flower full moon—and it is spectacular. Perched on top of the jungle, we bathe in what seems like filtered daylight that changes color with the arc of the moon.

unday we awaken to a workday. We are due to pick upour photographer at the little town of Astor (yes, those Astors), an eighteenth-century riverside settlement originally named Spalding's Upper Trading Store, where Billy Bartram based himself for months. That means making thirty miles downriver on a day of heavy boat traffic. We take a short pit stop in DeLand at the Southern Belle's home port, Holly Bluff Marina, for refueling, ice, encouragement, and yet another map. Then we settle in for the grind north, downriver.

Parts of the central St. Johns are more populated than others, and we have to open a couple of drawbridges for passage along the

way. The scenery remains beautiful, with the river widening out into flatter vistas of marshes, swamps, and fields, all hosting ibis, egrets, herons, and cranes. Above us, bald eagles, red-shouldered hawks, and flocks of kites begin to appear in profusion, along with the ospreys—mature birds, nestlings, and nearly fledged young—that become downright ubiquitous. If we've been lulled into forgetting that our little nature corridor remains so close to civilization, Sunday on the waterway brings that delusion of seclusion to a noisy end.

Enter the notorious "Florida Man" (of internet fame). Suddenly paradise is invaded by roaring airboats, pontoon boats, ski boats, cruisers, cigarette boats, and Jet Skis, rocking us with sweeping wakes and blasting our ears with music—Skynyrd, Creedence, bro rock. Tribal markings are on full display: elaborate ink, tiny thong swimsuits, and a few huge banners flying from sterns advertising the captains' preference in politics. As with the alligators, we leave one another alone.

Nearing Astor, we tie up on the backside of a little spot called Lungren Island, then take the skiff to meet our photographer, Frank, who is waiting for us at the Blackwater Inn, a popular old bar and restaurant anchoring the waterfront. After a quick snack of fried catfish fingers, smoked mullet dip, and cold draft beers, we pile into our skiff and head back to the *Belle* for the night. We retireearly, resting up for the next day, when we will face our biggest navigational challenge of the trip. Destination: Silver Glen Springs, just off the western side of Lake George, a few miles north of Astor.

At twelve miles long and six miles wide, Lake George is Florida's second largest lake. Its eastern half is off-limits to civilians because it's an air force bombing range. On the west lies Silver Glen Springs, another state park and one of the river's most popular destinations. The trick, at least by boat, is getting there. The lake—once ocean bottom—is so vast and flat and featureless as to

be disorienting. The channel across the lake is well marked. Silver Glen Springs is not. You are supposed to hit a certain marker, then turn and follow a compass course to a barely noticeable slit in the bank that leads to the springs. We soon discover our boat compass is haywire, but Frank pulls out his iPhone compass, and we recover in time to locate the cove opening. At this point, all hands are manning their battle stations, and I am holding my breath. To avoid running aground, a lot has to happen quickly, with no room for error. Don and Frank run back to the



stern to open the engine hatch and raise the propata precise point, which keeps us moving but reduces our steering ability. Relying on the GPS chart, Kate has to guide me through a tiny channel that winds around various shallows and islets. Then we arrive, entering a gorgeous lagoon of crystal-clear water—only to find it packed with other houseboats.

Having come this far, we press on, dropping anchor just inside the lagoon, which turns out to be the perfect spot for what feels most like a genuine tropical vacation. Here we can leave the boat at will, by jumping into swim or snorkel or tube, or by kayak to explore, or by skiff to range farther. It's not that alligators don't hang out at these springs: it's just that they can't lurk invisibly underwater, which reduces the worry of stealth attack.

The springhead here is the main attraction. It churns out sixty-two million gallons a day, which attracts not just tourists but also lots of fish, including several hundred five- to ten-pound striped bass that seem oddly out of place hanging above the boil. (These fish are no longer anadromous migrators to and from the Atlantic; they live here year-round.) The huge blue crabs inhabiting these springs are another sign of the river's incredible diversity. Some of us wander up a creek and find a series of little boils bubbling out of wetlands, like quicksand. We wonder if one of them could be Jody's Spring from Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings's *The Yearling*. (Legend has it that the region's most famous author modeled it on one she saw here on a voyage up the St. Johns.)

The ability to enter Silver Glen Springs by boat seems like a wonderful, anachronistic privilege on the one hand, but it comes with a dark side. Unlike at Blue Spring, some who gather here show little interest in the natural magic of the place, more interested in showing off the mega sound systems of their boats. Belleville, speaking specifically of Silver Glen twenty years ago, sums up the problem:

It clearly illustrates the classic argument between National Park Service advocate John Muir and Gifford Pinchot, architect of the U.S. Forest Service—between the closely supervised preservation of wilderness and unlimited public use on demand. It is an argument historically paralleled since the earliest days when Europeans first ascended the St. Johns, each of them pleading to appreciate it or clamoring to exploit it.

The dilemma persists. But I'd still rather be here than the Daytona International Speedway—a mere fifty miles east of us.

Once the day boaters depart, the lagoon becomes remarkably tranquil. Margaritas. Grilling out. Sunsetswims. Our time on the St.

Johns is running short, so we go all in on dinner: lamb chops, kofta, grilled vegetables, tzatziki, rice, and lots of red wine. Call it Greek Island night. We take the skiff for a cruise back out into the lake. A grinning retiree anchored at the mouth displays his just-caught largemouth for our approval.

aking up in Silver Glen, starting with a quick plunge into the clear water, evokes a morning in the Caribbean—exquisite. Because of how we anchored, extracting the boat from the cove appears to be a challenge, but by now we are experts. Kate jumps into the water and uproots the anchor, while Don and Frank discover they can stand in the water and push the boat around 180 degrees. Now it's an easy shot back into Lake George and then up the St. Johns to Holly Bluff Marina for what will be our longest cruise of the trip. We are totally relaxed and absorbing the beauty as we putter along unhurried.



The wildlife is as abundant as ever, but Susan's final log focuses now on flora:

Water hyacinth. Pickerelweed. Red hibiscus. Spatterdock, about to bloom—a.k.a. yellow pond lily. Yellow cow lily. Lance-leaved arrowhead. Alligator flags. Red-blossomed coral bean.

As we near DeLand, we tie off behind an island and head out in the skiff for our last supper. Continuing our immersion in Old Florida, we pull up to the sagging dock of the Shady Oak Restaurant and Bait Shack, which looks just like it sounds. Perched over the St. Johns at a place called Crow's Bluff, its dockside tables are ideal for drinking cold draft beer and watching the sparse river traffic pass by as the sun fades. We order an authentic cracker dinner, which we get in quantity: catfish, frog legs, alligator tail (all fried), hush puppies, potato salad, coleslaw, and baked beans. More beer. Then key lime pie. It all ranges from not bad to excellent.

On our way back, we wander down various creeks following tempting signs to fish camps that we never find, until the closing in of darkness forces us home. All of a sudden, it's become hot and muggy, and some nasty biting flies descend on us. For the first time, we close up the boat, crank the generator, and turn the AC on.

Still, all is well. We went in search of Old Florida, and we found it. It is hiding right here in plain sight—in the middle of America's third largest state (21 million residents), which lures 127 million visitors a year, qualifying it as the top travel attraction in the world. Few of them come to the St. Johns, or even know where it is. How long this sanctuary can hold the tide against the encroachment of civilization is an important question.

The next morning we dock the *Belle* at Holly Bluff and head home on the vast maze of interstates that vein twenty-first-century Florida. The reentry is stark. Desperate not to surrender the river magic entirely, we try to conjure the St. Johns through music in the confines of our car. For that we dial up the English composer Frederick Delius, specifically, his *Florida Suite*, inspired by the time he spent tending his family's citrus plantation on the St. Johns in the 1880s. Its intentionally evocative movements—"Daybreak," "By the River," "At Night"—sweep and soar, crackle and soothe. A French horn is not a heron, a piccolo not a limpkin, but its ort of works.

I didn't really find a "geographic cure" for my past out there, and I may still be an "emotional desperado." But I can certify that a week on the St. Johns River—with the right people, weather, and attitude—is a magnificent way to treat whatever ails you.

The Hueys share a moment while grilling dinner aboard the Southern Belle.



HOTI LIST

Secret island getaways, swamp sanctuaries, sunken gardens, dive bars, oyster shacks, and other haunts that embody a not-quite-bygone Florida

Bonnet House

FORT LAUDERDALE

A block from the seaside strip's bars and tacky T-shirt shops lies a hidden gem that comes with a bittersweet love story. Chicago lawyer Hugh Birch gave his daughter, Helen, this thirty-five-acre estate, with its tropical gardens and eclectic design, for her wedding to the artist Frederic Clay Bartlett in 1919. She died just six years later, and Bartlett later married Evelyn Fortune Lilly, herself a talented painter. Their whimsical artwork and decor, much of it honoring the couple's beloved monkeys, remain perfectly preserved.

Cabbage Key Inn and Restaurant

PINELAND

The burger at the Cabbage Key Inn and Restaurant is, like umpteen other places, rumored to have inspired Jimmy Buffett's "Cheeseburger in Paradise." Back in the seventies, Buffett drifted to the quiet key and its eponymous establishment by seaplane. Visitors today arrive by boat and can channel the icon with a cold one at the dollar-bill-covered bar, a stay at the inn or one of its surrounding cottages, and of course, a cheeseburger (though don't expect "french fried potatoes"—the sides on offer are coleslaw and potato salad).

Cap's Place Island Restaurant

LIGHTHOUSE POINT

Opened in 1929 by Eugene Theodore "Cap" Knight, a steamship captain who ran bootleg whiskey in burlap bags from the Bahamas, this seafood dive on the Intracoastal has impeccable Old Florida cred. Behind the bar of the onetime speakeasy and gambling den hangs a wooden figurehead from the bow of a Spanish galleon. The time-warp menu plays the old standards: linguine with clams, crab cakes, hearts of palm salad.

Charles Hosmer Morse Museum of American Art

WINTER PARK

The artist Louis Comfort Tiffany could coax color and texture from glass, and each December, Winter Park displays nine of his towering stained-glass windows in the central garden downtown. Steps away, the Morse Museum collects the world's most complete trove of



From top: Cruising at the Colony Hotel in Palm Beach; half-shell beauties at Hole in the Wall in Apalachicola.

his work, including a chapel that surrounds visitors in mosaics and majestic filtered light. Meditative galleries share vignettes of Tiffany's ceaseless creativity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuriesjewelry, experiments in pottery, and the sketches he drafted before transforming sand into relics.

The Colony Hotel

PALM BEACH

Since 1947, the Colony has set the standard for laidback Palm Beach cool with its dreamy pastels and über-attentive service. For a day in the sun, take a ride on the hotel's Beach Buggy, a custom-made golf cart with seats decked out in the same fun Seagrape print as its paddleboards. Lounge oceanside on and beneath powder-pink chairs and umbrellas, and if you get hungry, staff will deliver a picnic in a matching cooler.

Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary

The thirteen thousand acres of undisturbed wilderness in the heart of the Corkscrewwatershed provide sanctuary for many of the state's endangered species. including Florida panthers and roseate spoonbills. Take it all in from the park's boardwalk, a two-mile trail that ends at the largest old-growth bald cypress forest on the continent.

Cummer Museum of Art

JACKSONVILLE

In September 2017, the Cummer Museum's three formal gardens beside the St. Johns River got a visit from an uninvited guest: Hurricane Irma. The storm swamped the lower tier in four feet of brackish water, uprooted plants, and wiped out electrical, lighting, and irrigation systems. Last June, after a \$1.3 million restoration, the revived gardens reopened, their lawns once more green, their reflecting pools once again glassy and pristine: the calm after the storm.

Florida Southern College

LAKELAND

Thirteen of Frank Lloyd Wright's innovative creations grace the west side of this campus in Lakeland, making it the largest single-site collection of the architect's visionary designs. The impressive structures, some built by Depression-era and postwar students working their way through college, include a chapel that appears to hover above the ground, a first-of-its-kind water dome, a planetarium, and more than a mile of geometric esplanades.

Hole in the Wall Seafood Market and Raw Bar

APALACHICOLA

The shucker wears a ponytail and a camo Ace Hardware ball cap, and if it's not too busy, he'll show you a pair of ovster tongs, a miniature replica of the ones they still use in the beds just offshore. Bottles of beer emerge from an ancient green icebox. The waitress is as salty-sweet as the half-shell beauties she delivers by the trayful. (Overheard when the owner lingers to chat up customers instead of giving her a hand: "His jawbone's got to be sore in the morning.") Come for the oysters, stay for the unscripted dinner theater.

Honeymoon and Caladesi Islands

WEST OF DUNEDIN

In 1940, lucky newlyweds won a Life magazine contest to honeymoon in thatched bungalows on a secluded Gulf Coastisland, the brainchild of a clever real estate developer who then owned the land. Those lodgings are long gone, but you can still dig your toes into the sand at what is now Honeymoon Island State Park. Bring your pup for a frolic on the pet beach, or for a deeper wilderness experience, catch the ferry to Caladesi Island State Park's sugar-sand beaches to lounge, or rent a kayak to cruise among the mangroves and seagrass.

What's a tip for a perfect Florida day?

"In Palm Beach, all kids need to keep themselves amused is a fishing pole and a bicycle and access to the seawall on the Lake Trail. Use bacon from Publix for bait."

MIMI MCMAKIN INTERIOR



What does your perfect day in Florida look like?

"Fly fishing deep in the Everglades so far from the nearest cell tower that if the boat ever broke down. the searchers would find only bones and fat buzzards."

CARL HIAASEN

What's your favorite thing to eat in Florida?

"Fried grouper sandwich with slaw on a hot buttered potato roll. Just-harvested grouper tastes like the ocean-crispyfried with just a little flour, on a warm, delicately sweet bun with mayo, lots of lime juice in the slaw, and if you're lucky, spiced with chile."

BERNSTEIN CHEF

Key West's Bookish Side

When tickets go live for January's Key West Literary Seminar, they typically sell out in minutes. That's partly because the event features best-selling authors, but also because Key West is as alluring to book lovers as it is to party hoppers. That literary draw goes beyond the always-packed Ernest Hemingway Home & Museum: Papa's in-the-know fans also pop into his apartment building at 314 Simonton Street, where he wrote A Farewell to Arms. (And they're sure to toast him with a daiguiri at his former haunt Sloppy Joe's.) Over at Books & Books, visitors who grew up on Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret delight to discover Judy Blume herselfringing up customers. A couple blocks away, at the Chart Room bar, the novelist Thomas McGuane came to hear an up-and-coming musician named Jimmy Buffett play in the 1970s-and met Buffett's sister Laurie, now McGuane's wife. Both McGuane and Buffett have been spotted in the Monroe County Public Library, where archivists will retrieve Tennessee Williams's faded library card-if you know to ask.

Lorelei Restaurant and Cabana Bar

ISLAMORADA

At mile marker 82 in the Keys, by the beckoning roadside mermaid, you'll find one of the nation's premier après-fish watering holes. Famous guides, including Rick Ruoff and Tim Klein, ferry clients directly to the congenial decks of the tiki bar (a former bait shop), where, over cold beer, conch chowder, and live music, they ponder tarpon battles won and lost while watching the sun set lazily over the blue-green water of Florida Bay.

Mai-Kai

FORT LAUDERDALE

Tiki torches light paths to man-made waterfalls and lush gardens, but at Mai-Kai, the classic kitsch of hula dancers and fire spinners takes center stage at the nation's longest-running Polynesian dinner show. Drinkin the island vibe—waitresses wearing floral bikinis and sarongs serve up punches in ceramic headswith a splash of prestige. A celebrity favorite in the sixties and seventies, Mai-Kai now resides on the National Register of Historic Places.

NEAT

ALYS BEACH

There will always be a place on the Panhandle for mullet tosses and two-dollar Budweisers. But even on the Redneck Riviera there comes a time to put on a clean shirt and splurge on a round or two of "thoughtfully curated," Instagrammable cocktails. Should the mood strike, NEAT's sleek tasting room will be ready, amid Alys Beach's whitewashed villas and art-directed plunge pools. Its rotating menu features cameos by small-batch gins, Japanese whiskeys, and such mixological novelties as turmeric and activated charcoal.



Ole Florida Fly Shop

BOCA RATON

Tucked into a nondescript shopping center a few blocks from the Atlantic, Ole Florida Fly Shop serves as the brick-and-mortar mother ship to a massive online store. That enables the shop to carry an enormous selection for walk-in customers. Envision forests of fly rods, walls of fly-tying materials, and concierge-level service that frequently turns a quick stop for a fly or two into an hours-long visit.

Renninger's

MOUNT DORA

Carry small bills to barter, and scout blue-and-white garden urns and seasoned Wagner and Griswold castiron skillets at Renninger's, the 117-acre flea market and antiques utopia north of Orlando on U.S. 441. Ramble downhill through the outdoor vendors to the air-conditioned heirloom wonderland and find longtime vendor Peggy's booth for age-softened monogrammed linens and perhaps the same tiny orange juice glasses your mom had when you were a kid.

Rod & Gun Club

EVERGLADES CITY

Travel to South Florida's yesteryear at this venerable inn and restaurant. The sprawling complex sits on five waterfront acres at the gateway to the famed Ten Thousand Islands of the Everglades, and has hosted luminaries that include Hemingway and five former presidents. Guests overnight in updated cottages on the grounds, but the original lobby and dining room, lined with square miles of pecky cypress paneling and a Noah's ark of mounted fish and game, still charm.

Sarasota Art Museum

SARASOTA

For a town with a population of less than sixty thousand, Sarasota is surprisingly fertile ground for the arts, with symphony, opera, and ballet productions and a mother lode of midcentury design. "People make pilgrimages from all over the world to see Sarasota architecture," says Anne-Marie Russell, executive director of a new institution that promises to further raise



the Gulf Coast's arts profile: the Sarasota Art Museum at Ringling College of Art and Design, opening in December. Rotating exhibitions occupy a campus of three buildings, two of them historic schoolhouses that are themselves architectural landmarks.

Stan's Idle Hour

GOODI AND

For one weekend in January, this beach town bursts to life as the dive bar Stan's Idle Hour hosts the Mullet Festival (this year January 24 to 26). Created in 1985 by the late bar owner and local legend Stan Gober, the event centers on a zany dance contest with elaborate feathered costumes and outlandish choreography, after which one lucky lady is crowned with the coveted title Buzzard Lope Queen. With fresh seafood, live music, and the memory of Gober himself looming large, the festival remains a phenomenon-one that draws as many as five thousand revelers.

Sundy House

DELRAY BEACH

You might think of the Sundy House as a cure for the common hotel: twelve artsy guest rooms behind a 1902 Queen Anne showpiece with a wrap around porch and an airy dining room that serves brunches of national renown. The showstopper, though, is the Taru Garden, a riot of tropical greenery with thousands of plantscoconut palms, ferns, bananas, elephant ears, gingers, bamboo, and plumeria-framing a freshwater swimming pond landscaped to suggest a Yucatán cenote, complete with limestone boulders and waterfalls to explore during your afternoon dip.

Sunken Gardens

ST. PETERSBURG

Decades before Mickey Mouse arrived, tourists drove instead to the west coast to visit Sunken Gardens, one of Florida's first roadside attractions. A century later, the destination has lost none of its vintage charm in the midst of cosmopolitan St. Petersburg-an oasis chockfull of meandering paths, cultivated lawns, spreading canopies, secret pools and waterfalls, rare flowers, and, of course, its famous pink flamingos.

Tarpon Springs

NORTHWEST OF TAMPA

This city where the Anclote River meets the Gulf of Mexico opens a window to old-world Greece. Divers from the old country came to Tarpon Springs in the early 1900s to harvest sea sponges, and today the Sponge Capital of the World is home to the U.S.'s largest Greek American population per capita (and the biggest Epiphany celebration in the Western Hemisphere). At the docks, catch the aroma of smoked, savory octopus drifting from a nearby restaurant, and overhear locals speaking in their native tongue. If you're lucky, you may even spot a dive boat returning, piled with a sponge haul.

Three Sisters Springs

CRYSTAL RIVER

When temperatures dip in the winter, manatees flock like snowbirds to Three Sisters Springs on the Gulf Coast, where the clear-as-glass water stays about seventy-three degrees year-round. Don a mask and snorkel to swim alongside the gentle giants mid-November through March, or grab a paddle for kayaking, stand-up paddling, or canoeing. A boardwalk surrounds the springs for an overhead perspective.

Vizcaya Museum and Gardens

MIAMI

Like a scene out of an F. Scott Fitzgerald novel, Vizcaya-once the estate of the millionaire James Deering-surprises with its sculpture-lined driveway, lavish plantings, and juxtaposition of century-old infrastructure, ornate gold accents, and sparkling cerulean water. Pause in the glass skylight courtyard, which lends an ethereal feel to a space that might have played host to Gatsbyesque parties bathed in moonlight not so long ago. G

-Susan B. Barnes, Monte Burke, Allison Entrekin, Mike Grudowski, Andrea Guthmann, Sallie Lewis Longoria, CJ Lotz, T. Edward Nickens, Steph Post, Allison Ramirez, Katherine Rodeghier, Caroline Sanders, and Abigail Tierney

Far left to right: A garden at Vizcaya; fire dancers spin at Mai-Kai; sponges in Tarpon Springs.

Where do vou feel most at home in Florida?

"In my actual home, which I share with my family and roughly 380 lizards."

DAVE BARRY

What's your favorite thing to eat in Florida?

"Awfully hard to choose between lobster and stone crabs for breakfast. Aw hell, I'll just fry up some snapper and eggs."

FLIP PALLOT SPORTSMAN









ALLISON MOORER IS BAREFOOT ON THE GRASS OF HER

Nashville front yard, holding up a water hose and spraying the hell out of a struggling fern. "I am determined to keep this little thing alive," she announces, hereyes fixed on the trembling plant. Moorer moves with a fierce determination across the yard to hand the hose to her nine-year-old son, John Henry, who is delighted to take over. She is that rare kind of person who always seems as if she has somewhere important to go but somehow still manages to appear unhurried.

The first thing one recognizes about her is her keen intelligence. She is a contradiction—memorably polite but never willing to be a pushover, simultaneously elegant and down-home, a quiet observer who also throws her head back with a wonderfully deep laugh. In the space of a few minutes, she can expound on the writings of Thomas Merton and Pema Chödrön, the struggle to raise a perfect tomato, a recent documentary about Molly Ivins, why the rhythm found in sewing calms her, and the mystery of faith: "God is in rosemary," she says, reaching down to slide the fragrant plant between two fingers. "I mean, look at it."

The singer-songwriter, who turned forty-seven last summer, is so lithe and luminous in her navy-blue sundress that it is easy to picture her as a fourteen-year-old girl back in southern Alabama, on an August morning when her life changed forever. After years of his rage and jealousy, Moorer's mother had left her father. He arrived in the middle of the night to begher back, but just before daylight, when he saw his pleading wasn't going to work this time, he shot and killed her and then turned the gun on himself in the front yard of the home where Moorer and her older sister slept inside.

That moment is at the heart of her harrowing new memoir, Blood, and an accompanying ten-song album of the same name. In both she refuses to look away from the tragedy-in one particularly haunting section of the book, Moorer examines her parents' graphic autopsy records for the first time with a perfect balance of calm description and aching emotion—but never becomes maudlin or self-indulgent. Instead, the one-two punch of memoir and album emerges as a precise, lyrical, and even wise meditation on grief, survival, and the healing power of creating art.

Both Moorer and her sister, the Grammy-winning Shelby Lynne, went on to successful careers in the music business, a fulfillment of the dreams of their parents, who shared a deep love for music. Their mother's natural-born singing ability often fueled their father's fury, as he didn't possess the same talent, despite a tremendous desire to be a singer-songwriter. Less than a dozen years

after her parents' deaths, Moorer had a record contract in Nashville with MCA and soon became an Academy Award nominee after Robert Redford featured the song "A Soft Place to Fall," a track from her first album, in his 1998 hit film The Horse Whisperer. She appeared in the movie and sang at the Oscars, and over the course of ten albums, she would be nominated for a Grammy and an Academy of Country Music Award and garner many other honors, eventually becoming one of the best-known and most beloved figures in the flourishing Americana music scene.

Constas from H. Audrey. Previous page: Top and necklace from Savant Vintage.

Moorer believes she would have been an artist regardless of what happened to her parents, but a very different one. "I don't think my art would have had as many teeth as it does," she says. "I don't think you have to necessarily suffer to make great art, but the truth is that most great art is born of it."

Before her parents' deaths, Moorer tended to observe quietly while her family boiled around her. "I was the family memory," she says. "From a tiny age, I spent a lot of time by myself, reading books or listening to records. I'd watch them fighting and think, 'There's something wrong with y'all, and it's not me." Her sister, who is three and a half years older, took the opposite approach, which on at least one occasion led to their father badly beating her. "She was so worried about Mama that she really thought she needed to be around to protect her, to distract Daddy," Moorer remembers. "When he'd get mad at Mama, Shelby would always do something to say, 'Oh, look over here." Moorer still blames herself for not intervening, even though she was a child at the time. "I carry a lot of guilt about [Shelby], knowing I didn't do anything. I was useless." She goes quiet a moment, her ghost-blue eyes dampening. "That was the hardest part. Knowing that she was hurting. I'd think: 'I'm fine, and those two are adults. But her." She shakes her head, remembering, then lets out a breath so long and weary she seems to have been holding it for years.

The sisters today share a profound, unbreakable bond. They call each other "Sissy," and Lynne wrote the foreword for the book, which she says changed her life. "Her voice has allowed me to open my own buried pain," Lynne writes. In 2017 they released an acclaimed album together containing nine perfectly chosen covers and one original, "Is It Too Much," which takes a simultaneously tender and gritty look at the trauma of their parents' deaths and the way they have leaned on each other to survive. The album led to a string of raw and moving performances that have become legendary among those who witnessed the shows. "No one else walks upon this road," they sing to one another in the song. "No one else bears this heavy load."



COUPLE OF WEEKS LATER, MOORER IS

at AmericanaFest in Nashville for a series of events, including a performance at the venerable War Memorial Auditorium, a quickly soldout gig at the famous Bluebird Cafe, and a surprise appearance at the showcase of her husband, the Texas-born singer-songwriter

Hayes Carll, whom she married this past May.

At each event, audiences seem mesmerized by the new material. Her voice is a powerful entity that prowls a room, raising goose bumps on the backs of arms. Yet it is more than just masterful



singing. Whether she is performing a rollicking foot stomper or a plaintive ballad, there is always longing in her voice. Combined with her constant themes of history, love, and conflict, it makes for something primal. At each performance, someone is wiping away tears. In song after song, in some iteration she is often singing about family (her parents, her sister, her son, her loves), which may be the most primal thing of all. People are moved because they all understand the kudzu-vine complications of family. They're moved because Moorer can so potently articulate that there is power in the blood.

Moorer and her sister have been sharing snippets of their lives their entire careers, but while most press has mentioned the way their parents died, very little has been written about the way they lived. While Moorer doesn't shy away from the hard parts-revealing much more about their story than ever before—she wants people to know that her childhood wasn't all trauma. "In some ways, it was idyllic," she says in the cramped greenroom of the Basement East ("the Beast," in local parlance), a venue in East Nashville where Carll has just gone out to entertain a raucous crowd of fans. She's sipping a vodka and soda and leaning in close to talk over the music. "My parents were alive. They were wonderful and complicated and creative. We were always fishing and singing together and roaming the countryside."

Making art was a daily occurrence at their house, and Moorer is grateful to them for instilling in her a drive to create. Her parents were constantly in motion: sewing, building furniture, and always singing and writing songs. Before long she saw that making art could be a mode of survival, a way to disappear into words and music. She wrote her first song at age eight—about Australia, where a classmate had lived—and she can still sing it: "Australia is a funny place to be / with kangaroos, koalas, and the sea." But even as a child the existential-questioning artist was already there: "I have never been to Australia and I bet I never will be / 'Cause I'm right here and I always will be." She's hardly stopped writing since, and she continues the family tradition of persistent creation not only with her songs, but also by tending to the petunias she raises in memory of her mother, or sewing a pair of curtains.

"To see an artist in her full glory renders the world bearable," Moorer writes in the memoir. Then, a little later: "Putting a creation into the world is asking to be understood and loved. The answer is not always yes." What Moorer has come to realize is that the reward has to lie in the work itself. "Sometimes people just don't respond," she says. "But I was in my forties before I understood that the doing is what matters. What we leave behind is important."

After John Henry was born, she began to think even more about legacy. Her son was diagnosed with severe autism, and she thought she might never be able to go out on the road again as a musician. So she signed up for graduate school and earned a master of fine arts in creative writing. "I knew I had to do something," she says. "I knew I'd have a terminal degree that I could use. That's the practical side I got from my mama." She also wanted to hone the craft of prose writing.

'Some days I would sit at my desk and just brace myself, just hold on," she says of working on the memoir. "It's too big and painful, to take yourself back in an active way. Actually calling it back."

The greatest accomplishment of the book may be that it allows her parents to live again, giving their stories the light of day. Her mother in particular comes to life with great specificity. Moorer recounts every detail she can remember—her hands, her smell ("like laundry dried on the line with an added bit of spice"), the way she always carried Doublemint gum in her purse—and conjures the picture of a fierce, frightened, and incredibly hardworking woman. "I realize now what a gift she gave me by showing up. I don't know how she did it. Somehow I got out of there feeling loved by her, and she just did that by force of will. Because she was distracted, and she had a needy husband who wanted all of her attention."

Moorer says she sometimes pictures her mother walking into her home in Nashville and looking around. "I can imagine what she'd say. I can smell how she smelled," she says, more quietly now. "It's such an absence. No one else can fill that hole. Not having her little special touches has been one of the hardest things in my life. Not having her to be my mama." Then, as often happens with Moorer, grace interrupts and she unnecessarily chides herself. "Now, that's selfish of me. Not having her in the world is a huge absence. She was a light."

She often thinks about what life could have been like if her father had gotten the help he needed and says that she sometimes finds Alabama state quarters that she believes he leaves for her. She also feels that her mother is frequently playing with her son. "Grief never goes away," she says. "It might change shape, but it always has its teeth in you. Trauma you can actually heal from. Writing this book and making this record have gotten me closer to that than I've ever been. You've gotta get it out of you. You've got to tell your story."

Moorer also found that writing the book and being a parent have summoned more empathy, a theme constantly under examination in the memoir and the new music. On the album she showcases songs from each of her parents' points of view and even records a song her father wrote a few years before she was born, which includes eerily prophetic lyrics: "I'm the one to blame, but I've paid the cost / Time has made me see just how much I lost."



T HER HOUSE, MOORER IS SEATED AT

her kitchen nook with her small one-eyed dog, Willie, curled up as close as he can get. Behind her the entire wall is covered with a couple dozen family photographs—some current, others from the far past-all outfitted in sleek black frames that make them part of one large instal-

lation. Portraits of her son and her mother reveal a startling resemblance. In another picture her father is smiling down at her. "I cannot think about my daddy without feeling sorrow for him, for how miserable and lost he was," she says. "And that's just the power of love." She points to the kitchen ceiling, which is painted a rich turquoise. "I painted the ceilings blue to keep the ghosts out," she says, referring to the long-standing Southern tradition. "Obviously it didn't work."

Moorer has only recently moved back to the South, relocating to Nashville last spring after fourteen years in New York City (much of that time with her ex-husband, the musician Steve Earle). "I missed people making deviled eggs and pimento cheese," she says. "I missed the warmth of folks. I needed to come home. I don't really like New York City all that much as a place to live. There aren't any porches there. Not a whole lot of 'Hey, I cooked a pot of beans, you wanna come over?""

She says she feels like she's on the verge of a second act, a new chapter. Art has always been her way of preserving, of keeping the stories alive. Outside, she pauses at the foot of the porch step, smiling as she watches her son play in a large mudhole he has fashioned with the hose. "I'm so well loved by awhole lot of people who want me to do well," she says after a moment. "There is no better place to be than that."

Behind her, the little fern she had soaked before is dripping, its small hanging basket turning back and forth as it struggles with the saturated weight of its soil. Already its leaves seem greener, glistening with water, pressing on for a little while longer.





Covered in Cotton

PRODUCT:

Throw blankets; \$80-\$90

LOCATION:

Florence, South Carolina



Southern Spun

COTTON BLANKETS MADE IN THE CAROLINAS WEAVE A TALE OF SOUTHERN FARMS AND FAMILIES

By Caroline Sanders

TO TRACY WOODARD, EVERY BITE OF FOOD AND scrap of fabric has a story to tell. "People should know where the food they're putting in their bodies and the fibers they have in their homes come from," Woodard says. For years, she and her husband, Ty, had been brainstorming ways to use the four-thousand-acre farm in Darlington, South Carolina, that Ty's family has operated since 1962, hoping not only to keep raising row crops and Black Angus beef cattle, but also to create a product that pays homage to the agriculture and textile industries of South and North Carolina. One morning in December 2017, Woodard awoke from a dream with the answer: simple blankets elegantly woven out of their highest-quality upland cotton.

Inconveniently, this dream came just after Woodard Farms had sold all of its crop for the year, resulting in the buyback of five thousand pounds of raw cotton. What the company lacked in timing, though, it made up for in location. "We're so fortunate that there is such a strong remnant of the textile industry in our area," Woodard says. "It looks a lot different than it has in decades past, but we found some incredible local businesses that understood our vision and jumped on board."

Each of these Carolina companies lies within 150 miles of the Darlington farm. After the Woodards harvest the cotton, the crop travels some twenty miles west to SP Coker Cotton Gin in Hartsville. "They give us all the data for that cotton, so we can trace every bale to the field it was actually grown on," Woodard says. "We know the exact plot of land each blanket came from." From there, the ginned cotton jumps the state line to Thomasville, North Carolina, where Hill Spinning ring-

spins the yarn before Shuford Mills in Hickory plies it. Back in the Palmetto State, in Błacksburg, Weavetec Inc. produces the throws on Jacquard looms and sends them to Craig Industries in Lamar, where the blankets receive hand-sewn Covered in Cotton labels. Back at their home in Florence, Tracy and Typackage and ship the finished blankets to buyers across the country. "It's about a five-hundred-mile round trip that the cotton makes before it returns to us," Woodard says.

The three initial styles, which Woodard designed with Harold Pennington Jr. at Weavetec, take their names from her and Ty's three children: the Tate, the original basket-weave throw named for their oldest; the Tyson, a waffle-patterned baby blanket named after their only daughter; and the Tobin, a herringbone design whose namesake also inspired Covered in Cotton's philanthropic mission.

In 2015, three months after he was born, Tobin Woodard spent thirty-five days at Palmetto Health Children's Hospital in Columbia with severe bacterial meningitis, undergoing an emergency brain surgery from which doctors warned he might never fully recover. While the family sat in a cold hospital room before the operation, a nurse handed them a blanket to keep them warm, and the practical gift comforted the family immeasurably. Now, for every ten throws Covered in Cotton sells, it donates one to a South Carolina children's hospital.

"After that time, what was important was important, and what wasn't, wasn't," Woodard says. "Tobin just turned four, and he is completely healed and whole in every way. There is hope to share with other people going through that." Since last December, Covered in Cotton has donated ninety blankets to families with children in hospitals in Columbia, Florence, and Charleston, and this fall, they added Greenville.

The company also has new offerings, including another throw, named for Ty's grandmother; a line of swaddle-style baby blankets; and six dish towels screen printed with recipes from various family matriarchs. These latest products, of course, remain rooted in Carolina agriculture and manufacturing. "Today more and more people are generations removed from the farm," Woodard says. "We want to educate people about where it all comes from. It's a privilege to share this story." coveredincotton.com



Cathead Distillery

PRODUCT:

Hoodoo Chicory Liqueur; \$35

LOCATION:

Jackson, Mississippi





Spellbinding Spirit

A DISTINCTIVE LIQUEUR WITH A TRICK OR TWO UP ITS SLEEVE

By Wayne Curtis

THE FLAVOR OF HOODOO CHICORY LIQUEUR LEGba Reserve is familiar yet not. On first sip, it comes off like a cousin of a coffee liqueur. But it's more highspirited, with bright citrus notes up front and fleetingly bitter toffee notes on the finish-an entrancing combination. ¶"My parents drank coffee with chicory when I was growing up," says Cathead's master distiller, Phillip Ladner. He chased after that taste by infusing ground chicory root into Cathead's mainstay spirit, the vodka the company has distilled since 2010. The first batch failed to flourish into anything very interesting after a week or two, so the cask was set aside and forgotten. Some months later, distillery founders Richard Patrick and Austin Evans inquired about it, and Ladner tracked it down. By then, the infusion had matured into something exciting. (The first tasting note involved "holy" and a sharper word for "dung.") More experimentation followed, including the use of bourbon barrels for aging. They sent the liqueur to market and tweaked it again based on feedback from bartenders-more chicory content, a bit sweeter. The final silky, full-bodied potion possesses enigmatic shadows, the perfect profile for a drink named after Afro-Caribbean mysticism. (Ladner barreled the first batch under a full moon on a Friday the thirteenth, a circumstance he regrets being unable to replicate.) The liqueur also rings in at 66.6 proof-evidence of more occult playfulness. "One of our wholesale partners asked us to change the proof," Patrick says. "We said no. It's fun and it's dark, and it's what the product is about." catheaddistillery.com

Southern Andiron & Tool Co.

PRODUCT:

Fire tools; \$495-\$1,250

LOCATION:

Brookhaven, Georgia





Hearth and Soul

MODERN FIREPLACE ESSENTIALS WITH ANTIQUE APPEAL

By Caroline Sanders

"I'M A FIREPLACE NERD," SAYS TREY MILLER, WHO with his wife, Marjorie, founded Southern Andiron & Tool Co. in an Atlanta suburb, Fascinated with the role of the fireplace throughout human history, Miller buried himself in study, focusing on antique tools. Inspiration sparked when friends began calling on his expertise to help them outfit their homes and fireplaces with the right wood and proper implements. He imagined a business plan centered around the practice-refurbishing antique andirons, which keep fireplaces clean and help wood burn more efficiently; redesigning lightweight fire screens; and creating bespoke fire tools that were not only functional but of heirloom quality. ¶ After two years of research and material sourcing, the Millers' idea kindled into handsome goods that include a heavy-duty fire iron, an ash trowel, and an ash whisk, all of which originate at a manufacturer in Doraville, where Georgia-forged raw steel meets hardwood handles. Miller and his team then hand sew thick leather around each handle as a heat protectant and install wooden whisk heads with a natural Tampico bristle. "Our tools are built to last for generations," he says. "The fireplace doesn't need to be reinvented. We just want to help people get excited about fires again. The tools are really a means to that end," southernandiron.com

PRODUCT:

LOCATION:

Taste of Satira

Gullah Geechee crab boil sack; \$15

Cross, South Carolina

Historic Heat

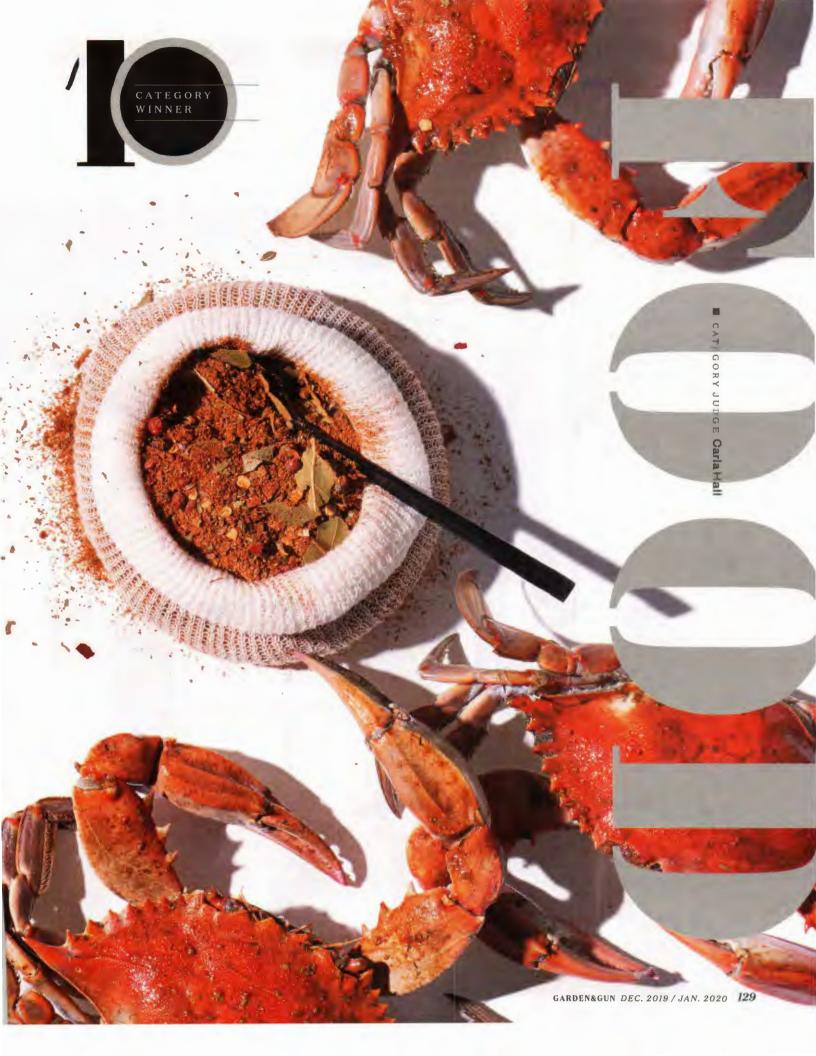
A SEAFOOD SPICE BLEND WITH PUNCH—AND A LOWCOUNTRY PEDIGREE By Wayne Curtis

"I'M NOT A CLASSICALLY TRAINED CHEF-I'M A HOME COOK AND

proud of it," says Pamela D. Jones Mack, the founder of Taste of Satira. "I cook with heart. And I love sharing the Gullah Geechee cuisine." Jones Mack became a food entrepreneur the old-fashioned way—by necessity. Growing up not far from Charleston, South Carolina, she was the oldest of four sisters. When her parents both took on night shifts, she began cooking for her siblings, making dishes she had watched her grandmother and greatgrandmother prepare. ¶ After college she moved to Atlanta, where she and her friends met up on Sundays to make meals together.

Her friends started asking her why she didn't cook professionally. Jones Mack waved them off, but then an encounter with the creator of an underground supper club led to her preparing a well-received meal there. A catering side business soon blossomed. Recalling the bold flavors of her childhood, she concocted spice blends for her meals and soon started selling her mixes in jars to those who inquired. For her boil spices-a mix of ten ingredients-she opted to "up the ante" with more cayenne to enable the shrimp, crab, or crawfish to speak with more force. She packed the spices in a cheesecloth bag to be dropped into a boil (it'll season four to five pounds of shrimp), but she says the more adventurous could use it for blackened fish or for bringing heat to other dishes. "It depends on your palate." ¶ This fall, Jones Mack got married and moved home, bringing her Gullah Geechee catering business with her. "That's the reason I'm moving back to South Carolina," she says. "It's being said that the Gullah Geechee culture is disappearing, and I want to be a part of preserving it." tasteofsatira.com





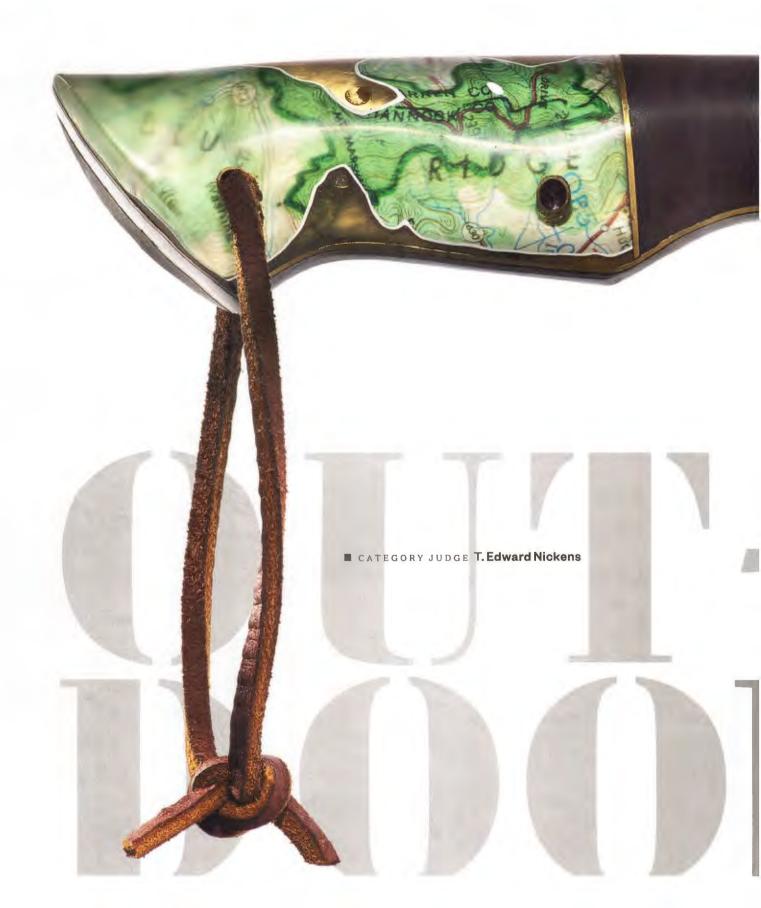
Stono Knife Works

PRODUCT:

Blue Ridge Camp Knife; \$325

LOCATION:

Taylors, South Carolina







TOPOGRAPHIC DETAILS PUT THIS STRIKING KNIFE ON THE MAP

By T. Edward Nickens

BLADESMITH ALEC MEIER LITERALLY DREAMED OF

this knife. While visiting his parents in Franklin, North Carolina, he glimpsed athree-dimensional topographic map his father had given him when he was a child. That night, his sleeping brain conjured the image of a knife with a handle crafted from a sliver of that old map, set in clear resin, so you could see the peaks and hollows of the Blue Ridge Mountains. ¶ Meier had long been obsessed with knives and swords. As a boy he made knives "the old-fashioned way," he says, "on a coal forge with hand bellows." As a historic preservation student at the College of Charleston, he became enamored with the practice of repurposing materials from old Southern houses. He forms the Damascus in his Blue Ridge Camp Knife from twenty-seven layers of steel from old files and saw blades, grinding the four-and-a-half-inch blade to thin the steel at the edge for effortless slicing and carving. But the dreamed-up handle, with its bit of topographic map sealed in resin just as Meier envisioned, is the real showpiece. If the Blue Ridge Mountains aren't your outdoor playground of choice, don't worry; Meier is happy to customize the handles based on a client's request-from Charleston to Arizona to the surface of the moon. stonoknifeworks.com



Blue Delta

PRODUCT:

Custom pants; \$500-\$600

Perfect Fit

FIVE-POCKET TROUSERS MADE WITH HERITAGE COTTON-JUST FOR YOU

By Elizabeth Hutchison Hicklin

TAKING A SAVILE ROW APPROACH TO AN AMERICAN

wardrobe classic, the design team at Blue Delta creates its denim or stretch cotton pants by making a personal pattern for each client, using sixteen exacting measurements. Once your pattern is filed, you choose the pants' cut, fit, fabric, and thread. This bespoke service-which has made Blue Delta popular with traditionally hardto-fit folks such as professional athletes, including Dak Prescott and Eli Manning-takes four to six weeks to complete, and the resulting pants will endure for years. ¶ Cofounders Josh West and Nick Weaver put in lots of early mornings and late nights to get Blue Delta up and running, but the Mississippi natives don't mind admitting that luck played a part in their success. Finding a lead seamstress with a denim background was especially fortuitous. "Sara Richey actually sewed for the only independent contractor of Levi's 501 jeans," Weaver says, and she lost that job when the local garment industry fled overseas. "Hiring her brought a lot of years of experience to a young company." And while Blue Delta makes "a damn good jean," he says, another fortunate meeting-this time at one of the company's roaming pop-up shops, with the head of London's storied fabric house Holland & Sherryled to the development of Blue Delta's dressier pant. Made with lightweight H&S Italian stretch cotton, the soft pants come in thirteen colors. "Seventy percent of our clients own more than one pair," Weaver says. bluedeltajeans.com









DRINK

HAND BROOMS BEREA, KENTUCKY \$5-\$95; sunhousecraft.com

Seven years ago, Cynthia Main left the shop she ran in Chicago, where she repurposed salvaged building materials, to study barrel making at a farming skills school in Michigan. There, she impulsively opted in to a broom-making class. "It's a craft that just gets into you," she says. "I was fried on big machine production. I feel like this is a way to rehumanize the process." After relocating to Berea, Kentucky, last year, Main took up broom making full time. Now she sources broomcorn from Texas, leather from Thoroughbred Leather out of nearby Louisville, and wood from the downed sticks and branches around her home, all of which she saws, shaves, and shapes into rustically imaginative brooms, brushes, and dustpans in her studio. "A craft like this stands at the nexus of place and people," Main says. "It's people using what grows on the land to give them what they need."

DINNERWARE TULSA, OKLAHOMA

\$20-\$150; craigproper.com

The key to Taylor Dickerson's pottery is near perfection. "I want to create things that make people wonder whether they're handmade or not," says the twenty-eight-year-old Oklahoma potter, who in 2016 opened Craig Proper (his middle name combined with the design aesthetic he strives toward). His hand-thrown, -glazed, and -fired goods are almost exact copies of one another, a process he refined during the six months of forty-hour workweeks he put in practicing the craft before selling his first piece. "I wanted to get all of my failures out," Dickerson says. "Now I spend a lot of time weighing out the clay to make sure things are exact. Everything I make is something I'd want to use in my own house." His bowls, plates, tumblers, and mugs come in an array of muted pastels to ensure the pottery remains as timeless as it is-nearly-flawless.

HUNTER & SCOTT BOURBON WHISKEY

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

\$40: reservoirdistillerv.com

A decade ago Dave Cuttino and Jay Carpenter "both had jobs selling things people really didn't want," Cuttino says. A better plan, they thought, was to make something people actually sought out—like whiskey. So they founded Reservoir Distillery in Richmond in 2008, putting them among the first wave of craft distillers to produce bourbon outside Kentucky. They launched by distilling three single-grain flagship products-whiskeys from corn, rye, and wheat. A few years later, while looking for a blend that would offer more complexity and authority, they combined the trio. A young bourbon with a mature taste emerged, and they christened it Hunter & Scott, a nod to their middle names. Their goal was to bottle a bit of Virginia. "We source all the grain from within about forty miles and use Virginia wood for some of the oasks," Cuttino says. "Provenance is everything."



Creature Comforts Brewing Co.

RECLAIMED RYE

ATHENS, GEORGIA

\$10 per six-pack; creaturecomfortsbeer.com

When the brewers at Creature Comforts Brewing Co. in Athens, Georgia, set about devising beers that drinkers would welcome in winter as much as in summer, they took a long look at amber beer. "It's not one of the most exciting styles," admits David Stein, a cofounder and vice president of brand development and innovation, "but it's one of the more traditional." Stein and his partners endeavored to imbue the ale with a bit more character. "When we were thinking about this beer, we thought about whiskey, and how we could deconstruct a rye whiskey and turn it into a lower-alcohol brew." They used malted and unmalted rye, and then aged the beer on different types of wood in search of something that could lend a dry touch and intricacy. They settled on French oak, less overpowering than American oak. The finished beer tastes light and full of body—a welcome sight in the fridge no matter the season.

Dayspring Dairy

TRUE EWE BOURBON CARAMEL

GALLANT, ALABAMA

\$8-\$14; dayspringdairy.com

"We started about eight years ago-I guess it was one of those midlife crises." Greg Kelly says, "Midlife adjustment," oorrects Ana, his wife and business partner. That adjustment involved Greg quitting his IT job in 2010 and the couple building Dayspring Dairy on thirty acres in Gallant, Alabama, establishing the first sheep dairy in the state. They started out with a dozen sheep for cheese making, and then began thinking about what else they could produce. "I'm half Colombian, and in South America, dulce de leche is just part of the culture," Ana says. The couple started experimenting, mixing sheep's milk with raw turbinado sugar and cooking it down until it developed an inviting, deep caramel taste. The ensuing sauce comes in three flavors: vanilla bean, coffee, and bourbon. We're partial to the bourbon version, which is particularly superb over ice cream (and equally righteous right out of the jar).

Scratch Pasta Co.

VIRGINIA WHEAT CAMPANELLE

LYNCHBURG, VIRGINIA

\$7 per 12-oz. bag; scratchpastaco.com

When chef and entrepreneur Stephanie Fees began selling her pasta at the Lynchburg, Virginia, farmers' market three years ago, she made it by drying it in a small greenhouse rigged with fans, heaters, and humidifiers, checking the progress every hour. "Pasta cracks if it gets too dry," she says. "It was a very labor-intensive process for the first couple of months—but I learned a lot about the science of pasta." She's since upgraded to a commercial dryer and a pasta machine, but she's kept with other traditions-including buying winter wheat from a Virginia farmer and using a bronze extruder to give the pasta a "rough, artisan texture." That's especially evident in the Virginia wheat campanelle, which holds on to even thick sauces with an enviable tenaciousness. Fees also dries the pasta now over fourteen hours, rather than using a quick blast of heat as larger producers do. "It preserves more of the true nature of the wheat."



Oil/Lumber

HAORI COAT NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE \$175; oilandlumber.com

American work wear meets classic Japanese design in Oil/Lumber's largely unisex jackets, pants, shorts, and pullovers. "When I started Oil/Lumber, I was designing more along workwear lines," says the company's founder, Ethan Summers, "Then I started to think; What's the stuff that made me weird and different as a kid that I love now?" He found the answer in his childhood closet among the traditional Japanese clothing his mother made for him when he was a boy. Summers took three years to perfect this contemporary take on the samurai-style haori coat, now one of his most popular garments. The light jacket is made to order in the company's Nashville studio and comes in black, natural, earth, and indigo, the last of which is hand dyed in the Japanese shibori style, using Tennessee-grown indigo. "Each dye batch is a little different," Summers says. "But I think that's why people like the indigo version so much-because each jacket has its own identity."

Saint Virginia Handcrafted Textiles

BIG SQUARE SCARF GAINESVILLE, VIRGINIA \$128; saintvirginia.com

Amy Hindman fell in love in Paris—with scarves. "I was sixteen and there was a French girl who had on this amazing scarf," she says. "It was my first fashion moment." Nineteen years later, when her hair began falling out during breast cancer treatments, the accessory took on new meaning. "I'd just had a baby, and I went from feeling feminine and beautiful to bald and sick," Hindman says. "I wanted an amazing scarf, something organic and soft that wouldn't slip." With the help of a grant from the American Society of Clinical Oncology and a workshop at North Carolina's Penland School of Craft, she began her own line: Saint Virginia. Today Hindman hand dyes organic voile scarves with all-natural dyes made from flowers, plants, roots, and leaves, much of which she harvests from the pesticide-free gardens and farms of friends and family. "To make something lasting out of something as fleeting as a rose or wild goldenrod is pure magic," she says.

Nate Cotterman Glass

FLOW DECANTERS PENLAND, NORTH CAROLINA \$170; natecotterman.com

When Nate Cotterman realized how many out-of-class hours his glassblowing elective required during his second year of college, he tried to drop the class. Fortunately, it was too late. "Glassblowing took to me, and I really took to it," he says. Now Cotterman works out of a studio in Penland, where he secured a three-year residency at Penland School of Craft, to produce his one-of-a-kind glass goods, including seven styles of decanters. "I started with eighteen, but I realized most weren't functional," he says. "They were too heavy, or didn't pour well, or had too big or small of a footprint to use." The winning looks blend performance with modern aesthetics—tilts, curves, askew angles - and pure glassblowing technique. "Forme, glassblowing lends itself to having a clean, untouched look," Cotterman says. "I'm using heat, gravity, and centrifugal force to get glass to do what I want instead of forcing it. It's engaging to work with this hot, fluid thing, and freeze it in time."



MAGNOLIA FAUX BOIS CANDLESTICKS NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA \$495; libirdstudio.com

Sculpted carefully out of low-fire clay in her New Orleans studio, each of Lisa Alpaugh's faux bois candlesticks has its own personality. "My magnolia designs are more traditional," Alpaugh says. "My other flowers often feel like a dancing girl with wild hair." Those floral themes often result in top-heavy candlesticks, and discovering how to shape them out of solid, wet clay required a long, strenuous period of experimentation. Today she builds each of her singular pieces from the bottom up, bisque-fires it, dips it in a hand-mixed white glaze, and fires it once more. The candlesticks come with Alpaugh's favorite Vance Kitira candles, as well as fitters for stability. "I love to set a pretty table," she says. "I love antique silver, and I collect antique monogrammed linens. This adds something lighthearted to the arrangement."

DUCK CALLS WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA \$250-\$700; rhjensengamecalls.com

"I like stuff with a story," Ralph Jensen says of the duck calls he turns, carves, and tunes by hand in Wilmington from a wide array of heritage woods, such as old walnut harvested from a Pennsylvania pond and ancient longleaf pine from logs salvaged from the bottom of the Cape Fear River. The custom woodworker has even made calls from a thirteenth-century chapel door from Bath, England. Jensen likes adding to the story, too-he will carve images of dogs and ducks into calls, and he's often asked to re-create the likeness of a favorite hunting companion on the large barrels that serve as canvases. One customer even asked him to incorporate the ashes of the buyer's beloved retriever. After carving and painting, Jensen says, he mixed a bit of the ash into the final finish, then painted it over the retriever's hand-carved relief. "The buyer was taken aback by it, and so was I," Jensen says. "It underscores how intimate and personal a duck call can be."

20.5-INCH KAMADO-STYLE COOKER AND TABLE CART

COLUMBUS, GEORGIA \$1,700; goldensoastiron.com

Established in 1882, Goldens' Cast Iron casts subway brake components, truck parts, bridge anchors, and gear housings, as well as these cast-iron kamado-style cookers. The beast of a grill/smoker/wood-fired oven gets clad in an all-weather powder-coat finish, weighs 330 pounds, and comes with height-adjustable grates, a searing plate, a single-piece cast-iron firebox, and a stainless-steel thermometer. A hinge cast into the cooker and a heavy-duty spring make for easy opening. "Southern pride and craftsmanship are intrinsic parts of our identity," says George Boyd Jr., who along with his brothers, Ed and John, is the fifth generation of his family to work at Goldens'. A few years ago, the company was exploring new ideas when an employee complained he'd broken the top of his ceramic cooker. "A light bulb went off," Boyd says. If Goldens' could help stop a train, it could also make the last cooker a customer would ever have to buy.







Armed with moxie and Nut Wizards, a dedicated throng of pickers hits suburbs, yards, and golf courses each fall during one of the South's most unusual harvests

By Bill Heavey

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERIC KIEL

 $A\,picker's\,truck\,piled\,high\,with\,black\,walnuts.\,Opposite:\,The\,Nut\,Wizard, an\,indispensable\,tool\,of\,the\,trade.$



IT'S THE ICE CREAM THAT DOES ME IN.

I'm touring the sixty-five-acre Hammons Products Company plant in Stockton, Missouri. In business since 1946, Hammons is the only major processor of black walnuts left in the country. Outside, tractortrailer loads of walnuts roll in from as far as seven hundred miles away and rumble toward the scales. Inside, white-coated technicians run twenty thousand square feet of computerized machinery to crack, shell, and sort nut meats into four sizes. Cracked nuts on conveyor belts pass through infrared beams that differentiate shell from meat. Tiny, precise puffs of air then separate the two. Before I leave, Brian Hammons, the grandson of the founder, tells me that around 40 percent of the company's production ends up in ice cream and invites me to try some at the Hammons Emporium a few blocks away in the town's tiny square.

The young lady behind the counter offers me a choice. "Vanilla ice cream with walnuts or walnut ice cream with walnuts?" Walnut with walnut, I tell her. One taste and my eyes nearly roll back in my head. I've never had ice cream like this. It's cappuccino-colored, rich, and deep. It's adultice cream. It tastes—incongruously, profoundly, deliciously-of earth.

Two very different kinds of walnuts grow in the United States, Almost all—about 98 percent—are the milder, thinner-shelled English walnuts. (They're actually Persian walnuts, but that's another story.) Almost all of them come from thousands of farms in California's Central Valley. The remainder are the more robust black walnuts, one of the last wild-growing foods still commercially harvested in this country (the short list includes wild rice and wild mushrooms). Black walnuts are native to much of the Midwest and the South, especially Arkansas, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Native Americans had been harvesting them for thousands of years before Europeans showed up. They ate them, dyed their hair and clothing with them, used them in poultices and medicines. There are a few experimental black walnut orchards, but the nuts have never been farmed on any kind of scale. Each October, about a hundred thousand people in a thirteen-state black walnut belt collect some twenty-five million pounds of walnuts and haul them to 230 hulling operations run by Hammons, which in addition to supplying walnuts for ice cream sells the shelled nuts by the bag and in confections such as black walnut brittle.

Unless you know what to look for, you'll drive right past these people. They don't appear to be carrying on a uniquely American tradition. They look like under-the-radar junk haulers. They wear gloves because stains from juglone-a compound in the hulls and tree roots that discourages the growth of other plants around black walnuts-last like tattoos. The pickers work in pairs, sometimes families. Look for somebody rolling a broomstick with a round wire basket at the end over the ground. These are Nut Wizards, invented just twenty years ago and a godsend. The basket's wires are spaced so that walnuts can get in but not out. Roll your basket full, empty it into a bucket, repeat. The contraptions mean the difference between working standing up and working on hands and knees.

Don't call them foragers. Foragers wander the woods with split oak baskets looking for truffles or some other delicacy. Pickers don't have to search. They know where their trees are. Black walnut trees can grow more than a hundred feet tall, live for centuries, and don't move around much. Pickers know which drop heaviest and first, which ones produce larger or smaller nuts. Most folks view the nuts as a nuisance. They'll see working pickers and practically begthem to come get the damn things. The shell can chip a mower blade. The trees like sunlight, so they don't favor deep woods. They grow in farm fields and suburban yards, in parks and on golf courses-almost anywhere, really. Two pickers spend a day collecting and driving between spots, then head to a hulling station such as the one at the Ozark Empire Fairgrounds in Springfield, Missouri, where two big yellow hulling machines roar six days a week for the month.

They'll tell you they do it to buy nicer Christmas presents for their grandkids, maybe put away a little mattress money. Sometimes it's a family carrying on a tradition. And it's a way to show kids what real work is, how they can earn something they want with their own labor. All of this is wholly true. But I suspect it's not quite the whole truth. Black walnuts are heavy. From thirty feet up, they land like little dud mortar rounds. They'll dent a car just like hail. Many pickers wear hats more for protection than warmth, because picking is physical labor, work. In a state like Missouri, which is walnut central, there are thousands of people who look forward to October all year, gear up for it, who go out ten hours a day six days a week for the whole month. These are the ones I'm curious about.

Numbers alone don't seem to explain it. In a good year, two serious pickers working all of October could earn north of \$3,000, before expenses, for their efforts. That's nothing to scoff at, but two people could make around that saying hello to customers at Walmart. So what gives?

go looking for answers and find a man named Jack waiting in line at the fairgrounds to unload. "I guess it brings back the farm ethic in some way," he says. Jack grew up on a farm in Kansas, studied economics at Washburn University, and sold real estate for thirty-three years before retiring in 2004. He's been picking most of his life. He's sitting in a truck any Seattle hipster would kill for, right down to the four-paint-job patina and the hula dancer on the dash. It's a Chevy Apache Fleetside, bought new by his dad in 1959 for fifteen hundred dollars. "We grew up without electricity, telephone, or an inside bathroom. Heck, we didn't have mail service after our dog bit the mailman. And picking walnuts is sort of like farm work. Just the daily get-outside-and-work, loading the truck. Save your money. Don't expect a lot. You don't need a lot of things when it comes down to it. I guess it reminds me of that." He has two grandchildren, fifteen and thirteen. I ask if they pick with him. "Sometimes," he says. "They do it when they want something. Hopefully this weekend. So many kids

Above: Black walnuts on the tree. Opposite, left to right, from top: Brian Hammons: freshly hulled black walnuts in the shell; an electronic sorting machine separates shell from nut meat at the Hammons factory; a picker at work; Terry and Shaun Crocker: a hulling station sign; bags of black walnuts waiting to be processed; a machine removes the nuts' green husks; cars line up to drop off walnuts at a hulling station.





Pickers and cousins Wilford Maples (left) and Clyde Gilmore, with a Nut Wizard.

The more nuts we get, the more Iwant. know this feeling. have felt it before while collecting ripe wild things. I've even named itabundance mania

don't know how to work, how to be patient."

What I'll find is that almost every picker I meet either grew up on a farm or worked on one. Maybe it's as simple as a deep attachment to the land and the seasons, a groundedness absent from modern life. It's a simple but slippery thing, fundamental but beyond the reach of words. If you had it once and lost it, the loss is deep, lasting. If you didn't have it, you wouldn't even know it existed. It's one of those social divides only some people see.

The next day, I arrange to pick with two men that Jim Noble, the hulling station boss here, counts among his best pickers. I'm standing in a parking lot near Battlefield Mall in Springfield when another classic truck-what's with these guys?-swings slowly into the lot. Seventy yards out, it gives a throaty growl and catapults itself forward fifty yards before stopping. Inside, Wilford Maples and Clyde Gilmore, both in their seventies, grin. "I'm guessing that's not the engine this thing came with," I say by way of a greeting. "Nope," Clyde says. They tell me the truck's a '66 Chevy S10 half ton with a hopped-up 327 engine, a V-8 with a fourbarrel carb, RV cam, and solid lifters. My experience isn't wide, but every farm boy I've ever met increased his truck's horsepower at one time or another. Clyde tells me rigs like this are called sleepers. Even the two exhaust pipes vent behind the tires so they can't be seen from the rear. "People go to pass these two old guys and we goose it. Lady in some kind of Porsche SUV

tried it the other day." He smiles. "Shoulda seen the look on her face."

Wilford and Clyde both grew up on farms, then drove trucks for forty years. "I grew up so far back in the hills they had to pump the sunshine in," Clyde says. "Hoot owls for watchdogs and wildcats for alarm clocks." Wilford nods. "Work was all we ever did as kids," he says, "so for us to sit around and not do anything wouldn't do." The two are cousins but as close as brothers. As pickers, they have a secret weaponexclusive rights to three area golf courses. Keeping these properties requires consistency (you pick rain or shine), thoroughness (you pick up every nut you see), and discretion. "If there's a tournament or something, we make ourselves scarce," Wilford says. "If it's casual golfers, you have to sorta read them. Some are happy to talk to you. Some want to be left alone. We don't interfere with them, and they don't interfere with us."

Golf courses aren't on the menu today. Instead, we drive to a gated community nearby. "A lot of homeowners just want the nuts gone," Clyde says. "They'll see the truck and ask if we want to do their yard." We back into the driveway of a house and soon start rolling our Nut Wizards. The nuts are thick here. You can't put your foot down without covering at least three, and we fill the Wizards with just a few strokes. Two full Wizards almost fill a five-gallon bucket. I figure I'm most useful as muscle and carry their buckets to the truck. A full bucket weighs about twenty-five pounds. You're more balanced if you carry two at a time. As I roll and carry, I realize that I'm enjoying myself. It's football weather, crisp and sunny. The oaks and maples are saturated with fall colors. The work is repetitive but not monotonous. Maybe that's because the progress is tangible. You see the results in the ever-fuller truck bed, the slowly increasing sag in the suspension.

And something in me is getting triggered. The more nuts we get, the more I want. I'm keenly attuned to the fact that it took a year for this moment to arrive, for the nuts to form, grow, ripen, and fall. There's an insistent nowness to it, to ripeness itself. The nuts are right here right now, but they won't be here long and won't be back for another year. A kind of mania overtakes me, a shot of pleasurable neurotransmitters. I know this feeling, have felt it before while collecting ripe wild things-wineberries, pawpaws, asparagus. I've even named it-abundance mania. Your consciousness telescopes down. There is only the next nut and the next and the next. You have no choice but to be present in the moment. It's deep and so easily aroused that I'm convinced it's a survival mechanism, part of our evolutionary hardwiring. The switch is there inside all of us, but you won't know it unless, by accident or intention, you reach in and turn it on.

To increase the truck's capacity, Wilford and Clyde have two fifty-gallon plastic bins in back that rise above the sides. We'll fill those, then dump into the bed. The two have had a good season so far, six tons, and there's still another ten days of picking. Clyde is the jokester of the two. At one point, he says, "It's not the money so much, really. It's getting to see people's faces watching these two old men pick up walnuts." Wilford is at the back fence on his knees, attacking a big pile. "The lawn guys hate'em," he says. "Just chucked them back here." A Wizard won't work here. You just get down on your knees and hand shovel them into the bucket. I relieve Wilford of two full buckets, and with the bins now full, I dump into the bed. "Hey, Clyde!" Wilford calls across the fence, fifty yards off. "Hear that? He's dumping into the bed. We already got twenty buckets!"

work with them until early afternoon, when I leave to meet up with Shaun and Terry Crocker, another pair of Jim Noble's top producers. I find the couple in a municipal park they'd prefer I not name. Shaun is in his early sixties, in overalls and a blue bandanna with stars on it. Terry, a few years younger, has long brown hair and big peace-sign earrings that sparkle when the sun hits them right. They've been married more than thirty years, happily by the looks of things. Both are retired, although not by choice. Shaun worked for the railroad for twenty-eight years, making his way up from trackman to welder to foreman. But after he had neck surgery, the doctor told him not to lift anything over twenty-five pounds. "Hell, your lunch box weighs that much," he says. The railroad cut him loose two years short of the thirty needed for full retirement. He's on disability, which pays considerably less. Terry worked as a customer service rep at a local cable company. But then a heart attack laid her up for a few months. She returned to find they had a new computer system that no one was assigned to train her on, nor did anyone have the inclination.

They, too, pick six days a week during October. So many hours that the round baskets of their Wizards deform into football shapes. They buy new ones each season, "Best we ever did was about twenty-four thousand pounds," Terry says. "That was a good Christmas. They say money doesn't grow on trees, but I've got to disagree."

As we pick, Shaun says he's seen every kind of car at the hulling station, Mercedes to Volkswagen. Terry remembers a woman who pulled up in a red LeBaron convertible, white interior, just loaded with nuts. "After she unloads, she asks, 'Can I just wipe down the interior and get it clean?' And I was like, 'Are you like this all the time or is today a special occasion?" Her tone isn't snarky. She seems rather to be marveling at how different one person can be from another. You can bet the woman in the LeBaron didn't grow up on a farm.

Shaun and Terry knew each other long before they got together. Their mothers were childhood friends. They connected when both found themselves recently divorced. "Picked me up, didn't you?" Shaun teases. "Just like a nut."

"Best nut I ever found," she answers.

We leave the park and do a couple of houses. One has a large bronze of a stag in the front yard. There are lots of nuts, some of which we have to kick away from stone walls and chain-link fences for the Wizards to get. "This part feels like yard work," I tell Shaun. He nods. It's not his favorite, either. "You can't just take the easy ones, though," he says. "You have to pick clean if you want people to keep asking you back." We do this, then move to a house where we have to coil the hose and kick nuts out of the ivy. Shaun says he has noticed that trees along roads drop earlier than other trees. He thinks it could be the vibration from passing traffic.

As the light starts to go and we're hauling our last buckets to the truck, I ask Terry about her heart attack. "I died in the ambulance," she says. "My heart stopped. All I remember is the nurse saying, 'She's coding.' Next thing I knew I was in heaven. I saw my mom, dad, my brother Ray, my uncle Bill. And behind them all these silhouettes of people as far as I could see. I didn't recognize them, but I knew they were my family. Because I just felt so much love. It was so peaceful. So don't worry about dying, honey. It's the easiest thing you'll ever do." She pauses. I ask her to continue. "Well, next thing I knew I was looking down at my body in the ambulance. And I knew I was going back to it and that it was going to hurt. A heart attack hurts really bad, you know. After that, I woke up in a hospital and knew I was going to be all right. Anyway, don't worry about dying, honey. Death was easier than anything I've done in my life. Till I hooked up with this ole boy." She smiles at Shaun. He studies his boots, almost blushing. "It's peaches and cream now."

We go back to the park and pick until the light is almost gone. We've dumped our last full buckets when Terry squints into the light cast by one of the park lamps, which have just come on. She's looking at the ground beneath a tree. We picked it clean three hours ago and already there are hundreds of new ones. Big ones, close together. "Be right back, hon," she says to Shaun, grabbing a bucket. "I just can't stand to leave those nuts lying there." G





Above: A vibrating inspection table at the factory; hulling station boss Jim Noble pays a picker for his haul.



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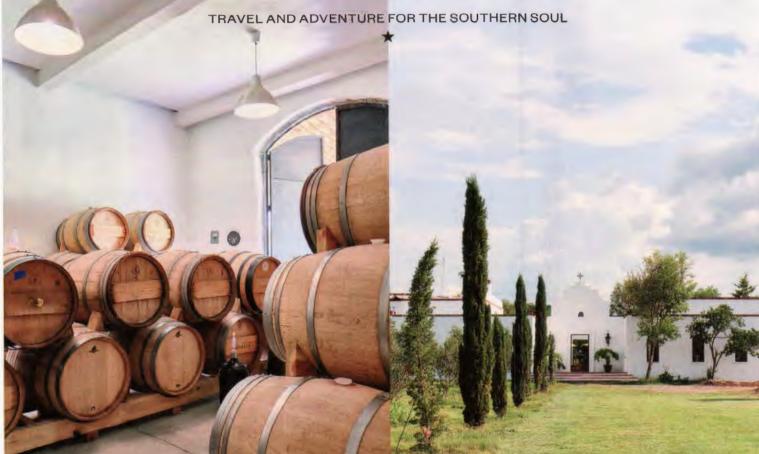


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SOUTHERN SOUL



The barrel room at Bodega Dos Búhos; the winery's hacienda.

ADVENTURE

Wine's Nuevo Frontier

IN THE RUGGED COUNTRYSIDE AROUND SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE, MEXICO, A YOUNG AND DETERMINED GRAPE SCENE TAKES ROOT

By Jonathan Miles

his," Branko Pjanicis telling me, "is what we call breaking the sombrero." He's plunging a four-foot steel tool, essentially a jumbo potato masher, into an open barrel of cabernet franc grapes. From Spanglish to English, breaking the sombrero translates as breaking the cap, but from winemaker to layperson, it means this: He's busting up

the raft of floating grapes at the top—that's the cap—to integrate them into the fermenting juice below. It's not easy work, which is why most wineries use mechanical pumps, but at Cava el Garambullo, the winery Pjanic and his wife, Natalia López Mota, founded two years ago, just about everything is done by hand. This aligns with their natural approach to winemaking—organic grapes, indigenous yeasts, little to no added sulfur. But this isn't all that sets them apart in the wine world.

El Garambullo is housed in a former cheese-making facility about fifteen minutes north of San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, and about three hours north of Mexico City. According to the age-old precepts of viticulture, wine grapes shouldn't thrive here. San Miguel de Allende sits at 20 degrees latitude, well outside of the 30-to-50-degree bands that have long been considered the cutoff zone for serious wine growing. (Mexico's best-known wine region, Valle de Guadalupe in Baja California, sits just inside the 30th parallel.) In the last ten years, however, winemakers such as Pjanic and

López Mota and about two dozen others have been bucking that rule, producing artful, high-IQ wines in a cactus-stubbled region where thirsts are generally quenched with beer or tequila. Aside from the juice, however, they've collectively produced something else: a new wine region, still in its infancy, that's ripe for exploration. Corn tortillas and tempranillo, al pastor and albariño: These are the flavor notes of one of the world's newest and most intriguing wine frontiers.

As a devotee of all things Mexican and all things grape, I've come to scout this budding region. My base camp for three days of exploring is the town of San Miguel de Allende, and not only because it sits at the bull's-eye of this wine-grow-



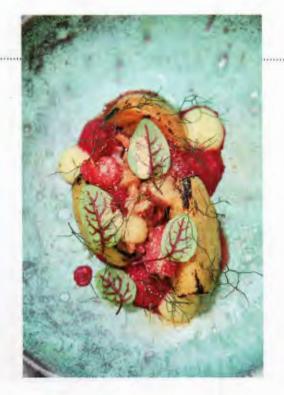
ing zone. It's long been a storied travel (and retirement) destination for the silver-fox set, and it's easy to see why: stunning colonial architecture, old-world cobblestoned streets, a surfeit of art and flowers, and a year-round climate that is reliably, in Goldilocks terms, just right. (It's also, for Southerners, a cinch to access, with direct flights to nearby León available from Dallas and Houston.) For lodging I settle into the Hotel Amparo, which opened last January. Its five suites are grouped around a fern-, bougainvillea-, and palm-

Clockwise from top right: Grapes on the vine; a Mexican flag billows; winemakers Branko Pjanic and Natalia López Mota.













Corn tortillas and tempranillo, al pastor and albariño: These are the flavor notes of one of the world's newest and most intriguing wine frontiers



draped patio that beckons you, as does the smart little bar tucked beside the entrance, to lounge.

But the stronger enticement, in San Miguel de Allende, is to wander the streets on foot. I engage an old friend, Euclides, who recently retired here, to guide me. He ushers me around the corner from the hotel to the Mercado Ignacio Ramírez, an energetic food market that leads to another market and then to another in a kind of dizzying tunnelscape of commerce. As if retracing the story of civilization, the stalls advance from selling meat and produce to medicinal herbs to textiles to metal art to jewelry to religious sculpture to contemporary paintings. From there we commence an aimless ramble, which San Miguel de Allende rewards. (Aesthetically, that is; the narrow sidewalks, steep hills, and lumpy cobblestones can exact a physical price. Do like the locals and wear comfortable, grippy shoes.) The buildings are mostly flat faced, often festooned with wrought-iron lamps, and their stuccoed exteriors are painted ocherous shades of Clockwise from top left: The cellar at Viñedos San Lucas; beet salad at Aperi, a beloved restaurant in San Miguel; stone walls and lavender outside Viñedos San Lucas; Gabriel Avila behind the bar at the Hotel Amparo.



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AT ASHLEY HALL





red, orange, or yellow, as if the municipal palette were dictated by the sunset. There's little in the way of signage, so the explorer must peek into every open doorway. The effect is of an Easter egg hunt, with instead of eggs the bounties being amate bark paintings, or duck and smoked marlin tacos, or a cocktail in which local blanco tequila is shaken with corn juice and garnished with corn-husk ashes.

But very little wine, at least of the local variety. For

that you must roam wider, though not significantly wider: most of the wineries are within a half-hour radius by car. El Garambullo is my first stop, based upon a tip from a wine-savvy local. I'll confess, however, that my first impression, idling in my car outside a low-slung, unmarked building on a shack-and-scrub backroad, is more Breaking Bad than breaking the sombrero. Once inside the small facility and in the company of Pianic, a thirty-nine-year-old Bosnia native with squarerimmed glasses and the slightly dry intensity of a scientist, I gather that, yes, I'm in a laboratory, but one dedicated to realizing, in Pjanic's words, "the purest expression of the grapes from Mexico's high plains." It's a high-minded place, with a handsome and compact brick-and-stone tasting room in the back. Visiting is by appointment, and appointments are best arranged via Instagram. The beaten path doesn't quite lead here.

Stacked between the oak barrels of cabernet francthe fruit purchased from local winegrowers for whom Pjanic and López Mota work as consultants-are a dozen or so crates of glossy purple grapes. These, Pjanic explains, are a varietal known as Rosa del Peru, which arrived in Mexico with Spanish missionaries in the sixteenth century. "I really want to see what it's like to work with one of the oldest grapes in Mexico," he says, outlining plans for an "ancestral sparkling wine." Two years in, the couple is producing about five thousand bottles a year, most of which is sold here, at the lab. but some of which shows up on the wine lists at forward-thinking Mexico City restaurants. He uncorks a bottle of white, or more precisely orange, a blend of chardonnay and albariño that he fermented with the grape skins to imbue it with tea-like tannins and an amber glow. It's a complex, idiosyncratic wine, with the chewy mouth feel of a red but the acidity of a white: a brilliant match, it occurs to me, for Mexico's meatcentric but chile-laced cuisine.

"When I came here, eight years ago, I had to throw out fifty percent of what I'd learned in Europe," says Pjanic, who met López Mota, a Mexico City native, while studying viticulture in France. The vines are young and spindly and still unpredictable. "The revival of the region"-centuries after the Spanish outlawed winemaking by anyone but priests-"is only ten or fifteen years old." Winegrowers are still experimenting with varietals; a dominant grape, like cabernet sauvignon in Napa or pinot noir in Oregon, has yet to emerge. "You have to be aware that you may never see the fullest expression of all the fine-tuning," he says, citing the decades it typically takes to establish a new region, for its character to solidify. "In that sense it really is pioneer work, like in the Wild West."

Touring the San Miguel de Allende-area wine country isn't quite like touring Napa or the Loire Valley. Pjanic's Wild West evocation can sometimes feel apt. Prickly pear cacti fringe the highways, pregnant with their fat maroon fruit. Cattle graze between them. Dogs and men on horseback go cantering along the

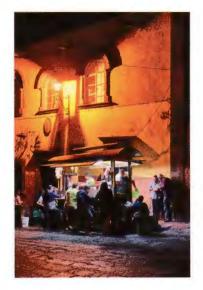


"Ireally want to see what it's like to work with one of the oldest grapes in Mexico,"Branko Pianic says, outlining plans for an "ancestral sparkling wine"

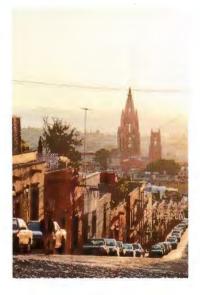


From top: Bodega Dos Búhos; rows of malbec vines; a room at the Hotel Amparo.











Clockwise from top left: A taco truck on Insurgentes street; a glass of red at Viñedos San Lucas; hot bites; sunset in San Miquel de Allende.

roadside. Unlike with large-production wine regions, don't expect to gogliding pastidyllic stretches of trellised vines quilting the hillsides. The vineyards here are mostly hidden at the ends of bouncy, dusty dirt roads, and are often on the other side of stern security checkpoints. It's grittier than most wine tourism. Because of that, perhaps, it's also more fun.

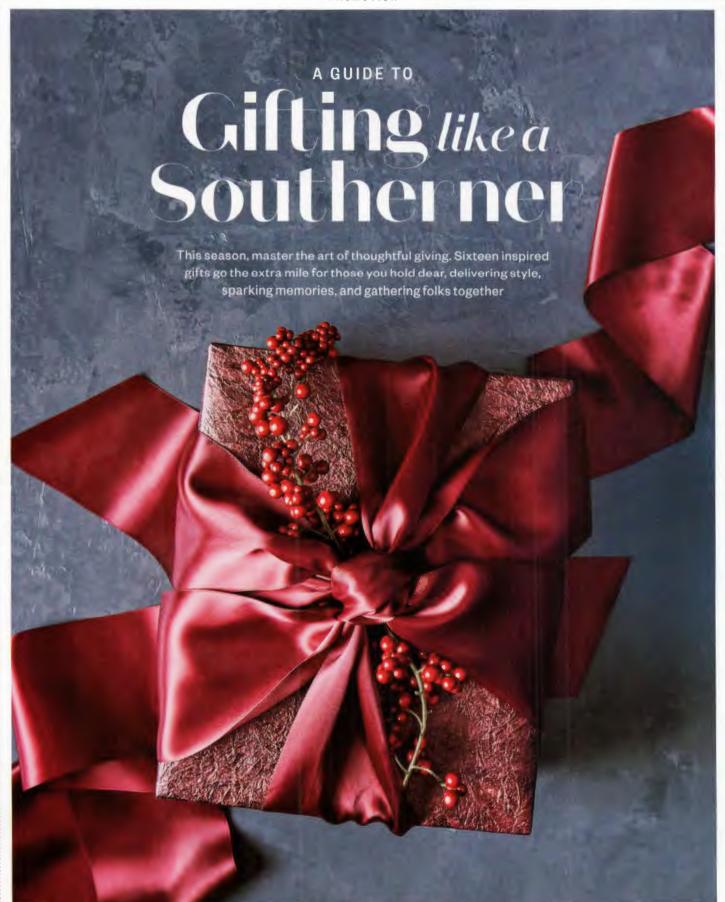
My next vineyard destination, Bodega Dos Búhos, sits at the end of one such dirt road. The tasting room, which doubles as an art gallery, is housed in a converted barn beside an iconically handsome white 1940s-era hacienda. The thirty acres of certified-organic vineyards begin almost at the doorway, sloping toward the green and violet Picacho del Diablo mountain peak in the distance. For the area, these are old vines, with some of them dating back to 2006, but the original vines weren't planted for wine. "The idea at the beginning was to grow rootstock for other winegrowers," one of the general managers, Higinio Aydelotte, tells me. "But the vines kept growing. So we had to do something with the grapes." Thirteen years later, the winery produces roughly seven thousand bottles per year. As Aydelotte concludes, with a philosophical shrug: "Things happen for a reason."

We taste through a flight of 2015 reds, all of them elegantly earthy: agrenache, a tempranillo, and a cabernet franc. My favorite, though, is a 2011 vino tinto that's pulled from the cellar on a whim. It's a quirky blend of aglianico (an underappreciated Italian varietal), tempranillo, and grenache, and while it calls to mind some of the deliciously funky blends coming out of South Africa's Swartland region, it mostly tastes sui generis: a frontier wine with its own grapey dialect.

New wine regions mature like internet start-ups or hip neighborhoods: A few scrappy, shoestring pioneers reveal the potential, and big investment eventually follows along. Viñedos San Lucas, east of downtown San Miguel, shows that happening here. It's part of a family of four wineries, with vineyards totaling 173 acres, but it's more than a wine operation. It's a luxury real-estate development, with vineyard-side lots for sale. There are olive groves, lavender meadows, a restaurant, polo fields, and a boutique hotel. It's the antithesis of gritty. As with Tres Raíces, another wine-centered, architecturally stunning development that recently opened nearby, it suggests serious faith in the future of the area's viticulture.

About the juice, I'll admit initial skepticism. Opulent wineries tend to produce opulent wines: brawny, jammy fruit bombs, calibrated for mass appeal. But Mailén Obón, the thirty-one-year-old Argentinean winemaker at Viñedos San Lucas and its sister wineries, wields some subtle moves. To harmonize her red wines with Mexican cuisine, she employs an old Italian technique called passito. "We dry the grapes under the sun to sunburn the tannins," she explains. "The sweeter tannins let the wine pair better with spicier foods." This nuance, for me, shines brightest in her lush cabernet sauvignon, which conveys the smoky-savory-sweet notes of a mole sauce. It's a smart, solid wine, though young; but more than that, it's a solidly Mexican wine.

Back on the cobblestones of San Miguel de Allende, after dark, I do what I always do when in Mexico: look for the food cart with the biggest, most boisterous crowd around it. The one I find is stationed outside a cantina, and the tacos al pastor, carved from a thick red shawarma-style slab of pork, then dressed with shaved pineapple and cilantro and a rust-colored chile salsa, are as good an investment as you can make with two dollars. I take the tacos through the cantina's swinging doors to eat at the bar, and reflexively order a beer. But then wait, I tell the bartender. You have any local wine? He doesn't. But someday soon, I suspect, he will. G

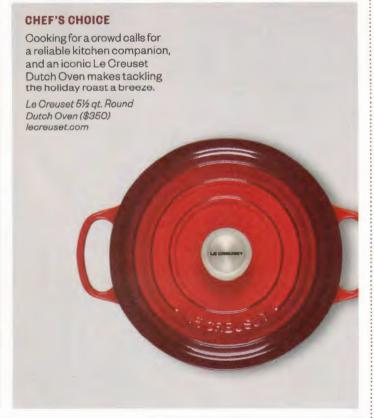


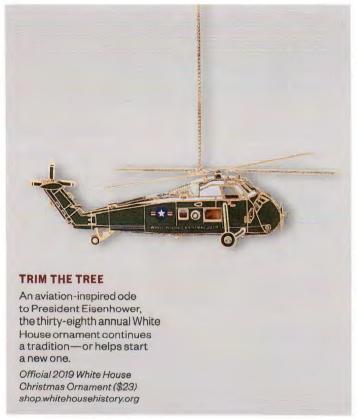
Gifting like a Southerner





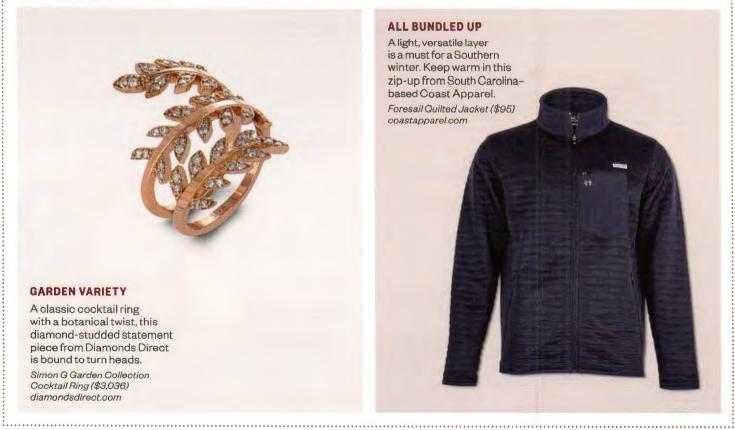












Gifting like a Southerner









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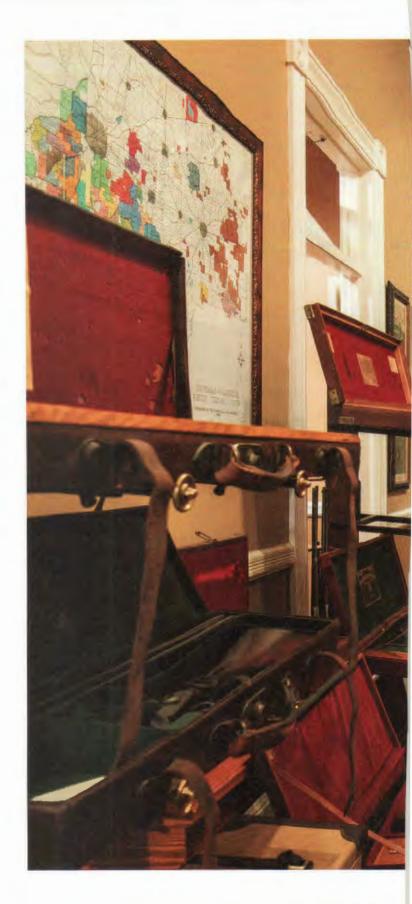
IF YOU WANT TO SEE SOME OF THE FINEST SHOTGUNS IN THE COUNTRY, FIRST YOU HAVE TO ASK

By T. Edward Nickens

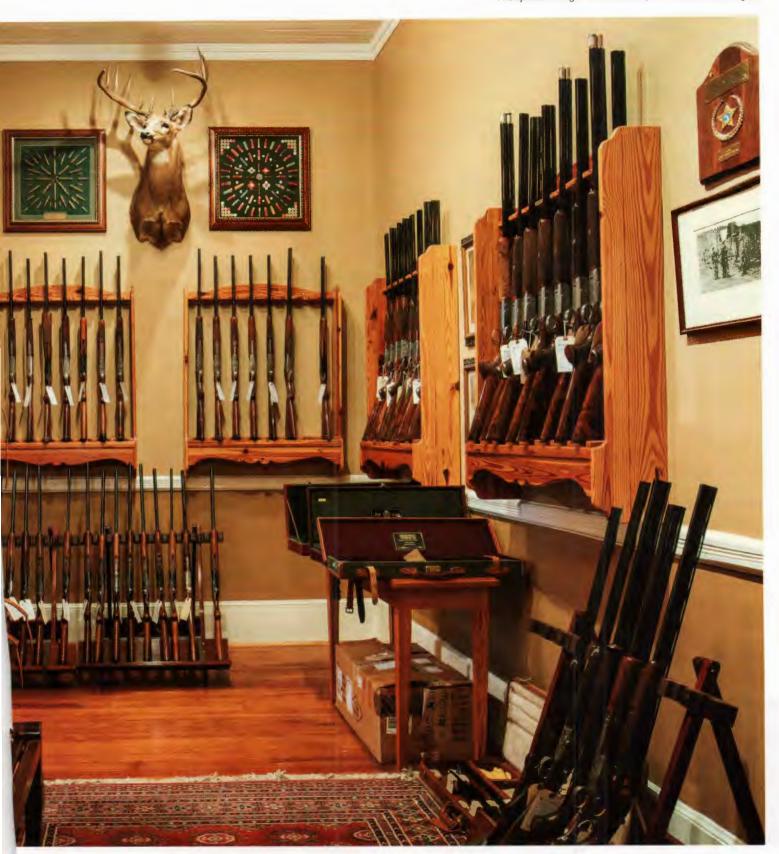
he narrowheart-pine stairs ascend above the bustle of the sporting goods store in Thomasville, Georgia, the scent of gun oil growing stronger with each squeaky step. It's the last few wooden treads that seem to draw back time's curtain. Antique European mounts come into view. There are polished wooden cases of sporting arms, and paintings and portraits hung floor to ceiling. Hunters and shooters climbing the last steps share a similar sense: This is hallowed ground.

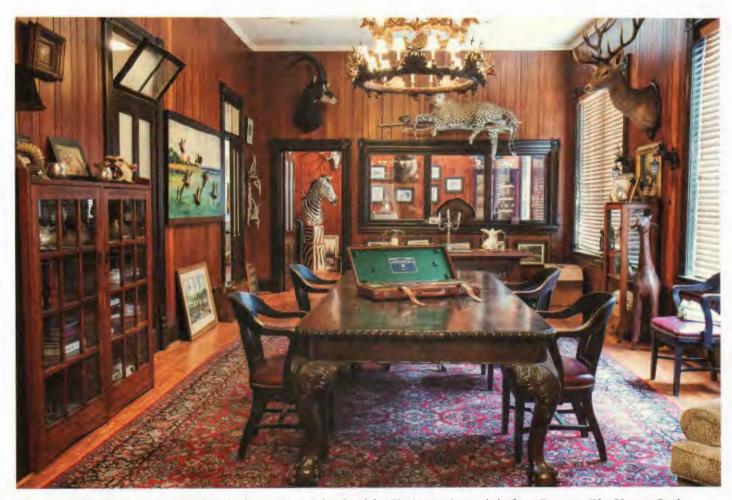
Kevin Kelly understands the feeling. "There are only two Long Rooms on the planet," he explains. "Purdey had the first. But this place is pretty special, too."

For more than a century, the Long Room of James Purdey & Sons has anchored the gunmaker's head-quarters in London's historic Audley House. The sprawling parlor began as part craftsman's work-bench and part sales counter to the world's most discriminating shotgun buyers. Bespoke long arms were displayed on a massive leather-topped table, crusted with cigar smoke and sawdust. Shotguns crowded cases, their barrels rising up like the masts above the wharves of the nearby Thames. The Long Room became a spiritual center of fine shotgunning. "There's a sense of place there that is very, very special," Kelly says. "You feel like you have come to a



 $The \, up stairs \, Long \, Room \, at \, Kevin's, in \, Thomas ville, \, Georgia.$





 $The {\it wooden}\ table\ where\ business\ gets\ conducted\ in\ the\ Long\ Room.\ Below, from\ left: A\ Piotti; engraving\ on\ a\ baby-frame\ Francotte\ .410; a\ 28-gauge\ Purdey.$

Holy Grail in the gun business."

Kelly would know. In 1973, he and his mother, Betty, opened Kevin's Guns & Sporting Goods in Tallahassee, Florida, which grew into a regional icon and spawned a massive catalogue business that helped define the upland gunning lifestyle. In 1992, looking to expand to the historic quail-hunting region of the Red Hills, Kelly and his wife, Kathleen, bought an imposing redbrick 1885 building on Thomasville's Broad Street. When Kelly first climbed the dark stairs into the open space upstairs, windows were missing and pigeons had taken up residence. Inspiration struck in an instant. "I thought, 'Man, that could be a Long Room up there," herecalls. "But I kept it under my hat. I didn't say a word to anybody."

For a decade, the upstairs space served as part stockroom, part conference room, and part party space, as Kevin's evolved into a Southern mecca for shooting sports. Over a few years in the early 2000s, Kelly converted the space into a Long Room-esque



The upstairs sanctum at Kevin's isn't open to everyday foot traffic. But ask nicely, Kelly says, and you'll most likely get a peek













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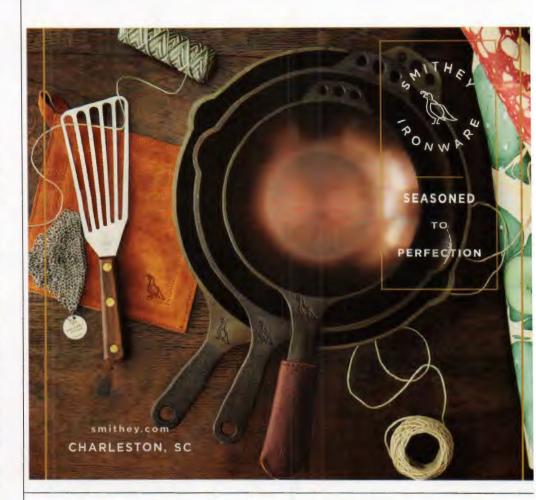
DUESOUTH

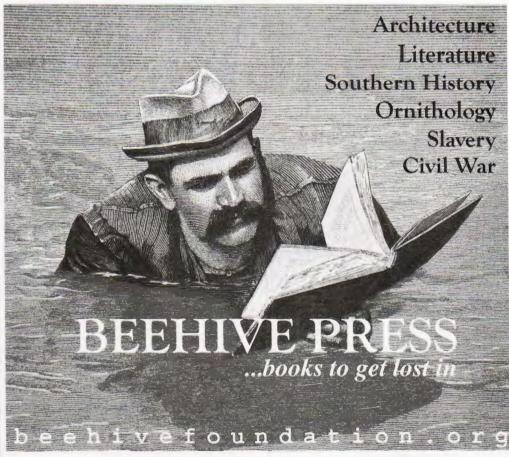
gun parlor and a suite of exquisite gun rooms to display a growing collection of fine sporting arms and art. Today the warren-like space hosts three separate gun rooms. One is home primarily to American double-barreled shotguns-L.C. Smiths, Parkers, and Winchestersand African big-game rifles. In another bay reside mostly English guns-a forest of Purdeys and Holland & Hollands and E.J. Churchills. Kelly's penchant for storied lever guns is evident elsewhere. There are more than fifty-Winchesters and Colts, largely, and many from the era of large-caliber buffalo guns. Fine shotguns from the Kevin's line of personally designed models built in Italy are clustered everywhere-side-by-sides and over-andunders in various levels of ornamentation. All told, there are guns that range in price from \$2,500 to \$250,000, and business is conducted around the Long Room's massive wooden table, akin to the one in Audley House.

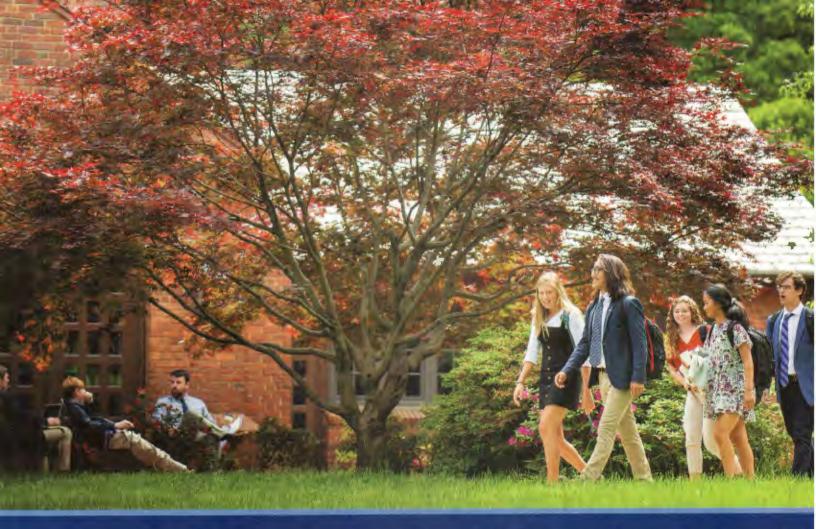
The upstairs sanctum at Kevin's isn't open to everyday foot traffic. But ask nicely, Kelly says, and you'll most likely get a peek. The space isn't a museum for hoarding history, he insists, but an expression of avery modern relationship to fine sporting arms. "No one here is living in the past," he says. "My family is totally immersed in this lifestyle."

In the weeks prior to D-Day, General Dwight D. Eisenhower and his chief of staff, General Walter Bedell Smith, commandeered the Long Room at James Purdey & Sons to plan the final, bloody invasion to wrest Europe from Hitler. Already, the marble pillars of the building had been pocked with air raid shrapnel. Years later, in 1975, an IRA bomb blew out every window in its east-facing facade. Yet history continues to be made at Audley House, where the Long Room still commands a sort of reverence.

Kelly harbors no pretensions as to having built a place of quite such gravitas. But like the original, his Long Room and its attendant gun displays seem to invite a sort of discovery that many upland shooters can't resist. "That's why we love to think about where these fine old guns came from," he says, "who owned them, and what journeys they took on their way to little Thomasville, Georgia. You pick up one of these old guns and you open doors to history. You never know where you'll end up."







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A Southern Rock Revival

MACON, GEORGIA

Strike a tuning fork against the floor of Capricorn Sound Studios, and you can still hear reverberations of the "Macon sound." In 1969, local impresario Phil Walden heard Duane Allman bend guitar notes that defied physics, and built a studio around him. Soon enough, ax slingers trailing long corn-silk hair made the pilgrimage to the geographical navel of Georgia with hopes of cutting a hit track—Wet Willie, the Dixie Dregs, the Marshall Tucker Band. "We longhairs stuck together," says producer and keyboardist Paul Hornsby. "Itake

SOUTHERN

pride that we created a whole new genre of music: Southern rock." The downtown studio also became known as an oasis of interracial cooperation in an otherwise divisive era. "It was this color-blind place," says Jerry Williams, a black vocalist and producer known as Swamp Dogg who recorded there. Capricorn closed in the late 1970s, and the building fell into disrepair and stayed shuttered for decades. Now, Mercer University in Macon has restored it to its vintage glory, rolling out fresh shag carpeting and rehanging psychedelic art in the greenroom. Recording equipment includes both state-of-the-art digital and old-school analog modeled on the original. Young and seasoned bands alike can reach for that '70s vibe, or book the studio to pioneer something new. The renovated building will also function as a "music incubator" for the university, with thirteen rehearsal rooms and an exhibition space featuring a digital catalogue of songs recorded during the heyday. The grand reopening is December 3, a day of live music and free tours. That night, an all-star lineup of Capricorn alumni including Jimmy Hall, Randall Bramblett, Chuck Leavell, and John Bell take the stage at Macon City Auditorium, fifty years after Capricorn first rocked Georgia, and the nation.

capricorn.mercer.edu

OUTDOORS

Alahama

THE BIRDS OF WINTER

"A crane marsh," wrote the conservationist and author Aldo Leopold, "holds a paleontological patent of nobility, won in the march of aeons." Soaring praise for a bird, but he wasn't rhapsodizing about some garden-variety sparrow. A whooping crane stands about five feet tall-the continent's tallest bird-and has white plumage, a superhero-mask patch of red, and an NBA-worthy wingspan that can reach seven and a half feet; an endangered species, its entire population dwindled to less than two dozen in 1941 but has gradually rebounded to more than eight hundred. This season, you can spot a few rare whooping cranes in their northeastern Alabama wintering grounds, along with thousands of their slightly smaller and far

more abundant cousins sandhill cranes, at the annual Festival of the Cranes, January 11-12 at the 35,000-acre Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, along the banks of the Tennessee River in Decatur. A heated observation building with one-way glass allows "craniacs" to ogle the birds at close range. You might even catch some cranes dancing-bowing, dropping their wings, and hopping, often while trumpeting their raspy croak, "It's usually younger birds," says Teresa Adams, the refuge's supervisory ranger, "trying to get attention."

■ fws.gov/refuge/wheeler



rkansas

A GENTLE SIMMER

Southern winters skew milder than those up North, but Southerners still suffer cold snaps and bouts of cabin fever. What better place to defrost and unclench than the bathhouses in and around Hot Springs National Park? The therapeutic 143-degree mineral waters of the celebrated resort town, in the Quachita Mountains about an hour southwest of Little Rock, have drawn a roster of famous visitors, including Hernando de Soto, Jesse James, Al Capone, and Babe Ruth. The wintertime lull-tucked between leaf peeping and the start of Thoroughbred racing at the Oaklawn track in late January—makes for a placid getaway. "If you want to avoid the crowds, come then," says KateLynn Parks of Visit Hot Springs. The no-frills Buckstaff Bathhouse, among the architectural gems along Bathhouse Row, has operated continuously since 1912 and offers whirlpool baths and full-body massage. The Arlington hotel, the state's largest and a

favorite of Capone's in the 1930s, books several mineral-water guest rooms where spring-fed water is piped directly into your private bathtub. Quapaw Baths, the most updated of the antique spa houses, features a steam cave and four thermal pools under stained-glass skylights in a 1920s Spanish Colonial Revival building. Say aah.

hotsprings.org

FESTIVAL

Florida

TELLTALE ART

Even the author Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, whose novel The Yearling brought the woods of Central Florida to life for countless young readers, couldn't dream up a more quintessential spot to host the Florida Storytelling Festival (January 23-26) than the Lakeside Inn in Mount Dora. Fables unfold at the state's oldest continuously operating hotel, where creaking rocking chairs line a long veranda, and vellow-and-white Victorian buildings on the shore of shining Lake Dora have greeted guests since 1883. Weekend-long festival pass holders can hone their own skills during workshops, putter along in a pontoon while a guide spins yarns on the lake, or sit in on a swap or a slam. A Listener's Pass covers all evening ticketed concerts, when storytellers from across the country orate beneath ancient oaks trailing tendrils of Spanish moss. Pete Abdalla from nearby Seminole County will be there, recounting tall tales from his youth. "No matter what you're hearing," he says, "you can sit there and think of something that happened in your life that's similar." Soaking in a story is as simple as tuning in, he adds: "A good listener is somebody who does."

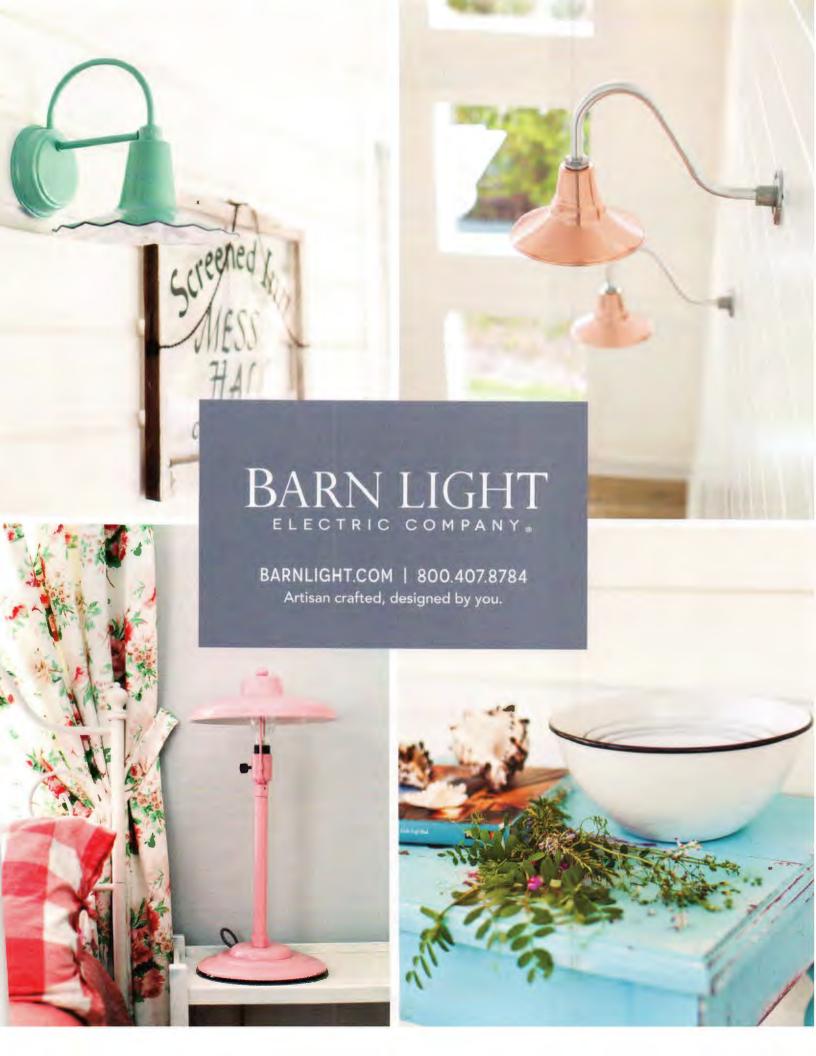
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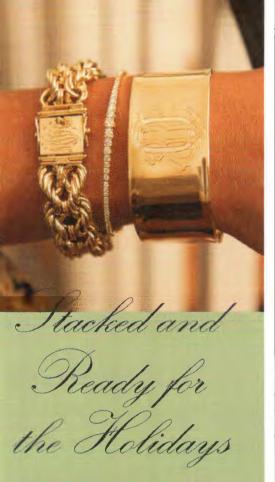
HISTORY

Kentucky

LOST STORIES FOUND

Henry Clay may have been the leader and heartthrob of the Whig party, but it was his wife, Lucretia, who kept his life running while the secretary of state and three-time





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SOUTHERN AGENDA

presidential candidate wooed constituents in the early nineteenth century. At their Ashland estate in Lexington, Lucretia raised their eleven children, operated a six-hundred-acre plantation, managed the dairy, and became something of a butter maven. Now historic Ashland is giving Lucretia-and eight other women who lived and worked there—their due in the new Women's Voices tour. "Lucretia was tied to the social constraints of the time, but we go all the way to the Clays' great-granddaughter Madeline Breckinridge, who was a suffragist of national importance," says Cameron Walpole, Ashland's manager of tours and education. (Among Breckinridge's wisecracks: "Kentucky women are not idiots-even though they are closely related to Kentucky men.") The tour celebrates the family's achievements but doesn't overlook their contradictions-Henry Clay said he disapproved of the system of slavery but owned more than one hundred enslaved people, including Charlotte Dupuy, whose powerful story the tour shares. In 1829, Dupuy sued Clay for her freedom. She lost and was jailed, and then Clay sent her to care for his grandchildren in New Orleans. A decade later, he freed her. "We don't know why," Walpole says. "But we know that she was a courageous woman, and that at great risk she took on the secretary of state, eventually gaining freedom for herself and her children."

henryclay.org

TRADITION

Louisiana

RIVER REVELRY

Instead of leaving out cookies by the fire-place, Cajun Country welcomes Santa Claus with actual fire—a miles-long row of bonfires on the levees lining the Mississippi River. "As children, we were taught it was to light the way for Papa Noël to find his way into the swamplands," says John Folse, the heralded chef and author of *The Encyclopedia of Cajun & Creole Cuisine* who grew up in St. James Parish, the epicenter of the tradition started by early German and French settlers. As a child, Folse gathered wood and helped make tepeeshaped piles up to twenty-five feet high,



spaced about two hundred yards apart on the levee. On Christmas Eve, families congregated and cooked in the glow of roaringflames. "Everyone around each bonfire made a different gumbo," Folse says. "My family's was wild game-smoked rabbit, duck, or whatever came off the swamp floor 'pantry." After eating and attending midnight church services, families walked along the blazing path. "The fires had died down after Mass," Folse says, "but we used the warmth of the embers to get backhome," Today, Gray Line New Orleans organizes a Christmas Eve tour to view the bonfires, which still resonate in generations of Louisianans' holiday memories.

graylineneworleans.com

OUTDOORS

Maryland

HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GLOW?

A decade ago in little Frederick, in western Maryland, a doctor named Peter Kremers grew frustrated with what he describes as the stagnant cesspool of Carroll Creekan algae-filled stream designed to mitigate storm runoff in the center of town. "It was a flood control project that went awry." Kremers says, "and it smelled." An amateur gardener, Kremers prescribed a plant program, and in 2012 he founded Color on the Creek, a nonprofit group that now tends the stream and fills it with four thousand hardy lilies, irises, cattails, reeds, and other water-filtering aquatic plants each April through October. But what to do during the off-season? A floating festival of lights. The doctor's second stroke of small-town-revivalgenius, Sailingthrough the Winter Solstice, decks the waterway with twenty-foot-tall twinkle-light-strewn model boats. The shining armada sets sail the weekend before Thanksgiving and lights up the creek through February 8. Volunteers create the festive vessels,

PENSACOLA:

CULTURE & CUISINE

A past rich in history and a future brimming with promise: Pensacola stakes its claim as the Gulf Coast's cultural hot spot

While the crystal water and sugar-white sand are often what draw folks to Pensacola, there's more to the Panhandle locale than beautiful beaches. Upon arrival, visitors are met with more than 450 years of rich history, still evident in the port city's landscape. From the remains of pre-Civil War military sites at **Fort Pickens** and **Fort Barrancas** to the storied **Pensacola Lighthouse**, constructed in 1859, the area claims a unique and complex heritage dating back to the days of Spanish conquistadores. Modern history comes alive here, too; venturing west of the city center, you'll find the **National Naval Aviation Museum**, the largest of its kind in the world, housing more than 150 historic aircraft.

It's not just the past that dazzles. Today, Pensacola is quickly becoming a cultural capital of the Southeast, one of the only cities on the Gulf Coast to boast the "big five"—a city ballet, opera, symphony, theater, and museum, all offering world-class programming throughout the year. The culinary scene is heating up, too, with a host of festivals and buzz-worthy restaurants populating the downtown area. From chef-driven concepts and retro food trucks on the iconic **Palafox Street** to fresh-caught-seafood spots overlooking **Pensacola Bay**, options abound to fuel up between adventures. Ready to explore?

Plan your itinerary at VisitPensacola.com







SOUTHERN AGENDA

which last year included what looked like a miniature Viking ship.

coloronthecreek.com

OPENING

Mississippi

LIFE AQUATIC

One of the more peculiar chapters of Hurricane Katrina's deadly landfall in 2005 took place in Gulfport, where a massive storm surge laid waste to the privately owned Marine Life aquarium, in the process washing eight bottlenose dolphins from their pool into the debris-ridden waters of the Gulf of Mexico. (Unprepared for life in the wild, they were soon rescued.) In a sense, things will come full circle when the gleaming new one-million-gallon Mississippi Aquarium opens to the public in Gulfport early in 2020, putting an exclamation point on the coast's recovery from both Katrina and the cataclysmic BP oil spill that followed five years later. Laid out in four exhibit buildings linked by curving, landscaped pathways and boardwalks on almost six beachfront acres, the nearly \$100 million facility focuses on conservation and will spotlight some three hundred species of freshwater and saltwater creatures from Mississippi and points beyond-from river otters to American crocodiles to catfish. The aquarium is designed for plenty of interaction, with touch pools, an aviary, and a thirty-foot-long acrylic tunnel that puts visitors smack dab in the middle of the main "oceanarium" tank, with sea turtles and sharks swimming above, beside, and below. msaquarium.org

OPENING

North Carolina

MOUNTAIN VIEWS

Beginning in 2017, guest curator Jason Andrew of the recently reopened Asheville Art Museum hit the road to visit the fifty outstanding painters, photographers, sculptors, weavers, and filmmakers who are part of the museum's Appalachia Now exhibition(through February 3). "The overall theme is that Appalachia has outgrown



Hot Spiked Chai

Yield: 1 cocktail

Chef Meherwan Irani's expertise with Indian spices extends past the masala-tinged fish and cumin-and-chile-seasoned lamb burgers he serves at his restaurants around Asheville, Atlanta, and now Charlotte, where the four-time James Beard Award nominee is opening a third iteration of Botiwalla Indian Street Grill at the new Optimist Hall. This wintertime treat mingles his Spicewalla chai tea blend with rum and North Carolina amaro.

INGREDIENTS

4 oz. equal parts brewed masala chaitea (such as Spicewalla Chai Masala) and hot milk 11/2 oz. Amrut Old Portrum **I barspoon** Eda Rhyne Appalachian Fernet 1/2 oz. honeu

PREPARATION

Brew black chaitea to listed specifications and add hot milk to about a 50-50 ratio. Preheat a mug with hot water. Discard water and pour in milky chaitea. Stir in remaining ingredients. Top with grated nutmeg.

its regionalism," Andrew says. "Now everyone is connected with a tap on a mobile phone, and the diversity and the magnitude of the art-making in the region have expanded." But the work is also rooted in the places the artists call home. Elizabeth Brim, a Penland School of Craft blacksmith, uses classic ironwork techniques to create intricate sculptures of flouncing tutus and billowing rhododendrons. Betty Maney, a Cherokee basket maker, weaves split-white-oak baskets in the tradition of her Native American ancestors, except in miniature. As it happens, the museum's opening in the fall came as the new Kimpton Hotel Arras officially unlocked its doors a block away, transforming the former BB&T Building-the tallest building in Western North Carolina-into a 128room boutique hotel and another indicator of Asheville's ongoing popularity, All the more reason for a visit-and an opportunity to get to know the modern mountain South better. "I think that Appalachia, while its roots are deep," says Andrew, "is deserving of a more nuanced narrative."

ashevilleart.org



South Carolina

CHARLESTON CHINESE

It took a call from a chopstick company for Shuai Wang's father to grasp his son's success. Sure, the chef has been written up in national magazines and was named a James Beard Award semifinalist, but after he placed a large order for chopsticks with a business owner who works with his father's Asian grocery store in Connecticut, his dad finally took notice. "The guy told him, 'I didn't realize your son was such a big deal," Wang says. "In Asian culture, your parents want you to become a doctor or an attorney. But I think that was the first time my dad recognized that I'd chosen the right career." Charlestonians have known it since 2014, when Wang and his wife, Corrie, fired up their food truck, Short Grain. Their rice bowls and karaage (Japanese fried chicken) had Lowcountry foodies queuing wherever the roving kitchen on



Get Stoked.



WILDLIFE WORKSHOP

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SOUTHERN AGENDA

wheels parked. Now, just up Spruill Avenue in North Charleston, Jackrabbit Fillynamed for the couple's Chinese zodiac signs of hare and horse-is their longawaited brick-and-mortar, a bright and playful spot where bunny illustrations hop along yellow wallpaper. The fan-favorite O.G. bowl, a heavenly pile of sticky rice, pickled vegetables, and seasonal local fish, will anchor the lunch menu, but diners can also discover new homages to Wang's native China such as ma la xiang guo, a dry hot pot, and his mother's dumpling recipe, Mama Wang, Shuai's first culinary influence, couldn't make it to Charleston to taste the first batch. "They work seven days a week" at the grocery, Wang says. "She joked that I just wanted her down here to make the dumplings herself."

jackrabbitfilly.com

STYLE

Tennessee

SLEEPING SOUND

"When people are in the hotel, we want them to know without a doubt that they're in Memphis," says McLean Wilson, owner of the newly opened Central Station Hotel on South Main Street. The lobby boasts an extensive vinvl library, where a DJ spins records at a booth carved from a refurbished organ. Steps away, an intimate listening room plays ten-minute podcasts that are better than any brochure stand, covering topics such as the city's punk music scene and the lasting power of B. B. King. The hotel is connected to an Amtrak station and marks a midpoint of an active rail line linking New Orleans and Chicago, and subtle touches throughout honor the spirit of travel. Memphis restaurateurs Andy Ticer and Michael Hudman, of Andrew Michael Italian Kitchen and a half dozen other spots, run the French brasserie, Bishop, as well as the lobby bar, 8 & Sand, named after abygone greeting used by conductors. (Sip on the Sazerac riff called End of the Line.) Art in the guest rooms includes framed shots by local photographer Jamie Harmon, who rode the rails and captured images of towns and stations along the way. Memphis-made Eggleston Works speakers in each room pipe in local tunes as funky as those of Booker T. and the M.G.'s and as



80 Years of Gone with the Wind

On December 15, 1939, Gone with the Wind premiered in Atlanta. Eight decades later, it remains the top-grossing film of all time (adjusted for inflation), and it has prompted countless spoofs and discussions about perceptions of the old and new South. Here are a few ways fans will remember the film in Georgia this winter.

On-Screen

Hattie McDaniel became the first African American actor to win an Oscar for her role as Mammy, but segregation barred her from the premiere. In an exhibition, Marietta's Gone with the Wind Museum honors the film's black cast members and displays an original script and costumes. Down the street, the Strand Theatre invites all to a screening of the film on December 14. Get there early for a prelude of the score played on the Mighty Allen Theatre Organ.

Bythe Book

The Margaret Mitchell House hosts Stars Fall on Atlanta, an exhibit about the premiere with movie posters, black-and-white photos, and historic context, in the same home where Mitchell wrote the novel on which the film is based.

Surrounding Views

In Atlanta for the premiere, Clark Gable visited the Cyclorama, a 360-degree painting depicting the Battle of Atlanta, a climactic event in the book and film. Over time, artists altered the Cyclorama to depict fictitious details—including a Confederate victory and a soldier bearing Gable's face. Last February, the Atlanta History Center unveiled a restored, historically accurate mural.

familiar as the songs of Elvis, whose adopted hometown celebrates what would have been his eighty-fifth birthday in January.

centralstationmemphis.com

FOOD

Texas

LIFE OF PIE

Jennifer Berdoll knows when the University of Texas football team has played a home game just by looking at her vending machines. Off Highway 71 in Cedar Creek sits a giant squirrel statue fronting Berdoll Pecan Candy & Gift Company, and the two pecan pie dispensers Berdoll fills with fullsize pies. "We always have great sales when people are headed back to Houston from a game and stop for a snack," she says. Her family got into the pecan business forty years ago, selling shell-on nuts from their garage, then building a shop to sell baked goods. The company became so successful, it made Berdoll a bit, well, nuts-so she installed the two vending machines to meet the store's after-hours demand. "One Thanksgiving," she says, "I went to restock one machine, and all the parking spots were full and there was a line." Ever since, she has kept the machines stocked twenty-four hours a day, every day except Easter and Christmas, and she estimates that between the store and machines, she sells ten thousand pies during the holiday season. If you're after the best Texas treat twenty-five dollars can buy, prepare to start counting change (although thankfully, the machines accept credit cards, too).

■ berdollpecanfarm.com







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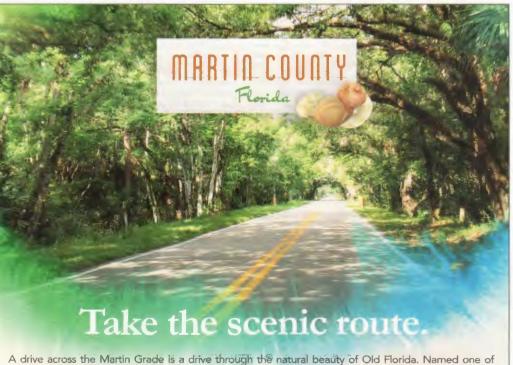
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SOUTHERN AGENDA

Virginia

WELCOME TO THE FOLD

The Carters are revered today as country music's first family, but there was a time when the patriarch worried that his folk-gospel sound would die with him. "He thought our music would be forgotten," says Rita Forrester, A. P. Carter's granddaughter and the executive director of the Carter Family Memorial Music Center in Hiltons (a town in the Poor Valley near the Virginia-Tennessee border). "My mother promised him that she would see that his music lived on," Since 1974, Forrester—and her mother, Janette Carter, before herhave made good on that promise with Saturday night concerts at the Carter Family Fold, where generations of Carters grew up. A museum occupies what was once a country store, and next door stands a lowslung performance venue that prohibits both alcohol and electric instruments. "We keepitold-timey and mountain-style," Forrester says. The Fold has hosted the likes of Waylon Jennings and Johnny Cash, but an annual Christmas Show (December 14) gives the next generation a stage. "These are the children who will pass our music down," Forrester says of the Junior Appalachian Musicians, student players from Independence, Virginia, Inlieu of an admission fee, audience members bring a canned food donation for a local food bank-and a dish to share at the finger-food potluck.

carterfamilyfold.org

Washington, D.C.

CENTER STAGE

"The opposite of a concert hall": That's how the president of the Kennedy Center. Deborah Rutter, has described the center's newly unveiled \$250 million annex, a cultural hub called the REACH. Designed by the architect Steven Holl, anchored by three angular white concrete pavilions housing glass-walled studios and rehearsal and performance spaces along the

Potomac River, and tied together by lawns and walkways, the expansion aspires to be an antidote of sorts to the black-tie, opening-gala image of the performingarts mother ship to which it's connectedcasual, unpretentious, and often free of charge. Officials envision the REACH as the kind of attraction where visitors drop by to watch a dance troupe rehearse, or students sit in on an improv workshop. Its opening festival this fall gave an indication of the cultural grab bag the center plans to program: everything from a master class with a New York City Ballet principal dancer to a concert by New Orleans musician Trombone Shorty to tai chi workshops to a DJing workshop to a sing-along outdoor screening of The Muppets Movie. On January 18, catch a star on the rise when Jazzmeia Horn, a Grammy-nominated jazz vocalist from Dallas, will perform.

reach.kennedy-center.org

OUTDOORS

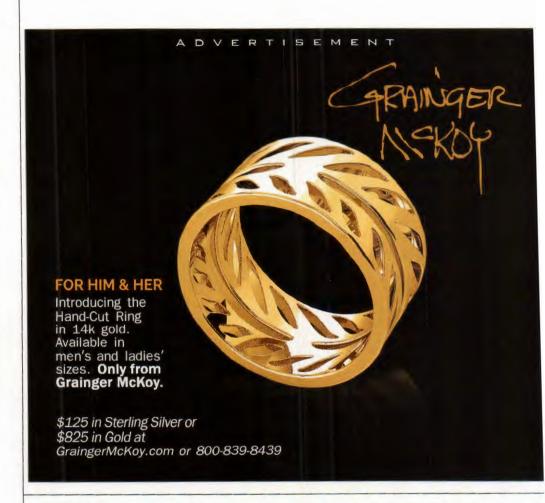
West Virginia

ALL DOWNHILL FROM HERE

At more than a quarter mile, Blackwater Falls State Park's sledding slope is the longest-and likely fastest-in the East. "Speeds of twenty to twenty-five miles per hour are pretty common," says Matt Baker, the park's superintendent. It's no wonder, then, that sledding has become the main winter attraction. Blackwater Falls even upped its game, adding a fifteen-hundredfoot people mover to transport sledders back up the hill on an eight-minute scenic ride through the white-dusted red spruces and hemlocks. "We've eliminated the worst part of sledding, which is the walk back up," Baker says. The slope is open Thursdays through Sundays all winter (the snow machines help). Baker's tips: Come early for a daytime session-"There are no reservations, and tickets usually sell out by eleven." Warm up with hot chocolate at the campfires. And try a Friday or Saturday nighttime session, when you can fly over powder beneath bright winter stars.

wvstateparks.com

—Candice Dyer, Kinsey Gidick, Mike Grudowski, CJ Lotz, Caroline Sanders, and Dacey Orr Sivewright



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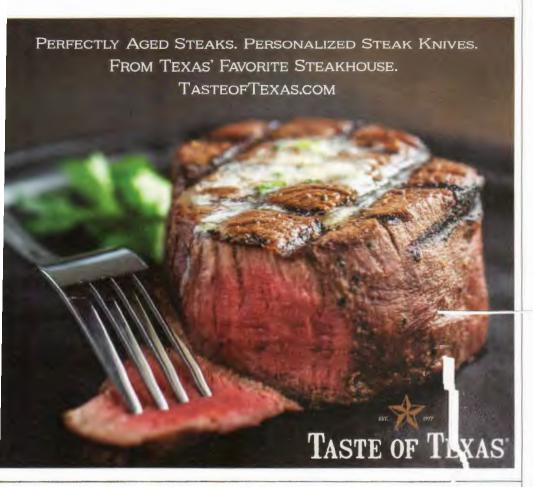


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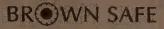
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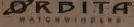




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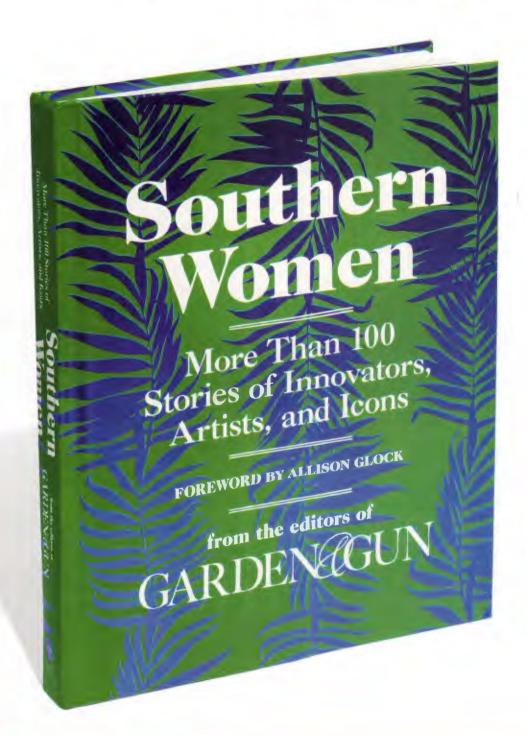


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GARDEN GUN



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as we celebrate the editors, contributors, and incredible women featured in the book.

Monday, November 11 Southlake, Texas

Conversation and Book Signing at Draper James

Tuesday, November 12 Washington, D.C.

Conversation and Book Signing at Ann Mashburn

Thursday, November 14

Lexington, Kentucky Conversation and Book Signing at Draper James

Tuesday, November 19 Atlanta, Georgia

Conversation and Book Signing at Draper James

Tuesday, November 19 Dallas, Texas

A Writer's Garden Literary Symposium and Luncheon

Tuesday, December 10

Charleston, South Carolina Conversation and Book Signing at Fieldshop by Garden & Gun

BOUTHEN WOMEN IN BUSINESS SERIES

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Thursday, February 27, 2020

Atlanta, Georgia Luncheon and Conversation at the Garden & Gun Club

Thursday, March 19, 2020 Birmingham, Alabama

Luncheon and Conversation at Bottega Restaurant

Thursday, April 2, 2020

Tampa, Florida Cocktail Party and Conversation at Oxford Exchange

GARDENGGUN Field Report

A RESOURCE FOR THE BEST EVENTS. EXCURSIONS, AND PROMOTIONS

PEOPLE, PLACES, PARTIES



















Southern All-Stars Dinner G&G and Synovus partnered with four James Beard-celebrated chefs to pregent an unforgettable meal at the Mockingbird in Nashville, 1. From left: Featured chefs Jeremiah Langhorne, Kevin Johnson, Maneet Chauhan, and Brian Riggenbach. 2. John Mitchell, Melanie Hatcher, and Christi Pennington of Synovus sip Angel's Envy cocktails before dinner. Chow Chow: An Asheville Culinary Event As the festival's national media partner, G&G traveled to Asheville for the inaugural four-day food and wine affair. 3. Attendees gather for an alfresco feast against the Blue Ridge backdrop. 4. Katie Button, Chow Chow president and chef-owner of Cúrate and Button & Co. Bagels. Louisiana Sporting Weekend G&G readers gathered at Grosse Savanne Lodge for a weekend of unrivaled hunting and fishing in partnership with Lake Charles/SWLA CVB and Blade and Balde and Box. Tanner Helms scans the sky for teal during the season's opening morning. 6. Kyle Edmiston, president and CEO of Lake Charles CVB, helps prove that Louisiana is a true sportsman's paradise. Sporting Issue Launch Party at Orvis The 2019 G&G Sporting issue debuted over Blade and Box cocktails at Charleston, South Carolina's new Orvis store, where proceeds of sales benefited the Everglades Foundation. 7. From left: Everglades Foundation CEO Eric Eikenberg, Orvis chairman Perk Perkins, and G&G David DiBenedetto. Annual G&G Shoot The seventh annual G&G Shoot took place on the sporting grounds of Reynolds Lake Oconee, where guests enjoyed a day of sporting clays and Southern hospitality. 8. G&GS Rebecca Darwin congratulates the overall highest scoring shooter, Caleb Collins. 9. Sandy Creek Sporting Grounds provides picturesque stations for the friendly competition.

SIGNATURE EVENTS

Mark your calendar for these upcoming Garden & Gun experiences



Greetings from Nashville

November 21-December 7 Charleston, South Carolina

Engage with more than fifteen of Nashville's finest makers and designers during this two-week residency at Fieldshop by Garden & Gun at the Dewberry hotel. Curated by Libby Callaway of the Callaway, this creative happening features music, goods from makers such as imogene + willie and Salt Ceramics, pop-up dinners, and more.



Bourbon & Bounty

Charleston, South Carolina

Gather at Garden & Gun's Charleston offices for an intimate Southern supper by celebrated chefs Isaac Toups, Whitney Otawka, and Craig Deihl. The sporting-inspired meal promises signature Blade and Bow bourbon cocktails and creative dishes from the land, sea, and sky.



Fieldshop Pop-In: Storyteller Studio

December 12-14 Charleston, South Carolina

Louisville's own Storyteller Studio drops by Fieldshop by Garden & Gun in the Dewberry hotel. Helmed by Sarah Jane Estes, the female-led operation crafts fine home textiles such as hand-stitched quilts and pillows.



Women in the Field: Ladies' Shoot

March 14 Bluffton, South Carolina

Join a group of sporting enthusiasts at the annual Ladies' Shoot, this year on the beautiful grounds of Palmetto Bluff. The event features an afternoon of sporting clays shooting followed by cocktails and dinner alfresco.



SEWE: Cocktails & Conservation

February 15-16 Charleston, South Carolina

Take in two discussions on conservation and wildlife as part of the annual three-day Southeastern Wildlife Exposition (SEWE) this February. Savor light bites and Blade and Bow bourbon cocktails at G&G HQ in Charleston's historic Cigar Factory.



Hunt & Gather: A Brunch with Garden & Gun

April 5 Fort Worth, Texas

Together with Visit Fort Worth, Garden & Gun hosts a special field-to-table dining experience during the Fort Worth Food + Wine Festival. The farm-fresh affair features Blade and Bow bourbon cocktails and local wild game prepared by acclaimed chefs Molly McCook, David Bancroft, and Jon Bonnell.

PENTRUDUIN COM/EVENTS



Oysters & Champagne

February 20 Alys Beach, Florida

Toast the 30A Wine Festival at G&G's kickoff party, held on Alys Beach's Central Park lawn. Enjoy live music while sampling expert pairings of fine bubbly and oysters from across the South.



Women in the Field: **Fly Fishing Excursion**

April 16-17

Cashiers, North Carolina

G&G returns to Cashiers for its eighth annual women's fly-fishing excursion, featuring a welcome cocktail party, a full day of guided fishing with Brookings Anglers, and a private Southern dinner at the Chattooga Club.

FIELD REPORT DESTINATIONS

A guide to adventures in the South and beyond



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ME Speak Design (\$85)

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Cocktail Set

Lost Cove Jewelry (\$160)

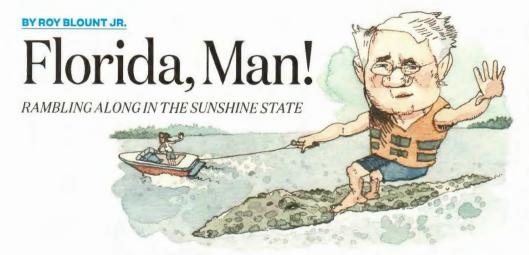




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he Hidden Florida issue? My first thought: Florida Man. We know the meme, the legend, the guy who keeps running over himself with stolen lawn mowers and trying to cash a check for \$368,000,000,000 that

a homeless man sold him for \$100. Now, at last, the man himself in an interview:

> G&G: How do you manage it? Making those headlines day after day: "Florida Man Charged with Picking Magic Mushrooms While Carrying an Alligator." "Florida Man Accused of Pressure-Washing His Neighbor." "Florida Man Claims He Only Drank at Stoplights." "Florida Man Wearing Mop on His Head 'Terrifies' Neighbors with Demands for Eggs."

FM: Uh-huh. And considering how much of the time I'm incarcerated. Or hospitalized. Yeah. Or both. Well, one thing is, my publicist is an escaped nun, so she doesn't charge much-G&G: An escaped nun?

FM: Well, I don't guess technically-

But that whole thing began to feel tacky. Who needs Florida Man? I go way back with out-of-the-way Florida, myself. My father's-side roots are in the Panhandle: Hosford, Marianna, DeFuniak Springs. For thirty-odd years, I have almost annually visited the Forgotten Coast, as the Apalachicola Bay Chamber of Commerce calls it: Alligator Point, Panacea, Sopchoppy, Shell Point, Dog Island, Carrabelle, Apalachicola—what a great name that would be for a soft drink. Sopchoppy—what a great name that would be for a hot dish. I ate fried snake and armadillo once in Winter Haven. My paternal grandparents met in Chattahoochee, at the Florida State Hospital for the Insane. They were attendants.

But far more notably, this coming March will be fourteen years since the following announcement:

Dear Friends,

We got married Saturday evening in Tarpon Springs, Florida, on Sunset

Behind us was a sunset, which was planned (though we didn't expect the double-yolk effect created by certain atmospheric conditions) and prolonged (as sunsets go), and a pair of dolphins, and a pair of ruddy turnstones, which were fortuitous and passing.

In front of us were a fully robed Unitarian Universalist preacher whom Lee Smith rustled up at the last minute and about twenty-five friends and acquaintances singing "Chapel of Love."

The friends and acquaintances of whom we speak are people who visit Tarpon Springs every spring to watch baseball, eat Greek food (it is a Greco-American sponge-fishing town), and sit around the motel pool until long after dark, talking. We sprang the wedding on them. Quite a few of them said it was the best wedding they ever saw, and the ones who didn't say it was, didn't say it wasn't.

We are very sorry not to have shared the wedding with all of you, too, but we are blessed to have so

many of you that when we thought about trying to get you all together, our eyes rolled back in our heads. We hope to see you soon enough that you will not have forgotten to ask what in hell a ruddy turnstone is and we will not have forgotten that we mentioned ruddy turnstones in the first place.

Joan changed her name? Yes, to Euphelia. From the Greek, for "true feeling."

Living together yet?

Not strictly speaking, but Joan's going to sell her house and squeeze in with me while she builds a new house. out of clay and wattles, for us both.

Going to get a dog?

We'll see.

How about a cat?

We'll see.

Llamas or something?

No.

Who is this from?

Oh, sorry:

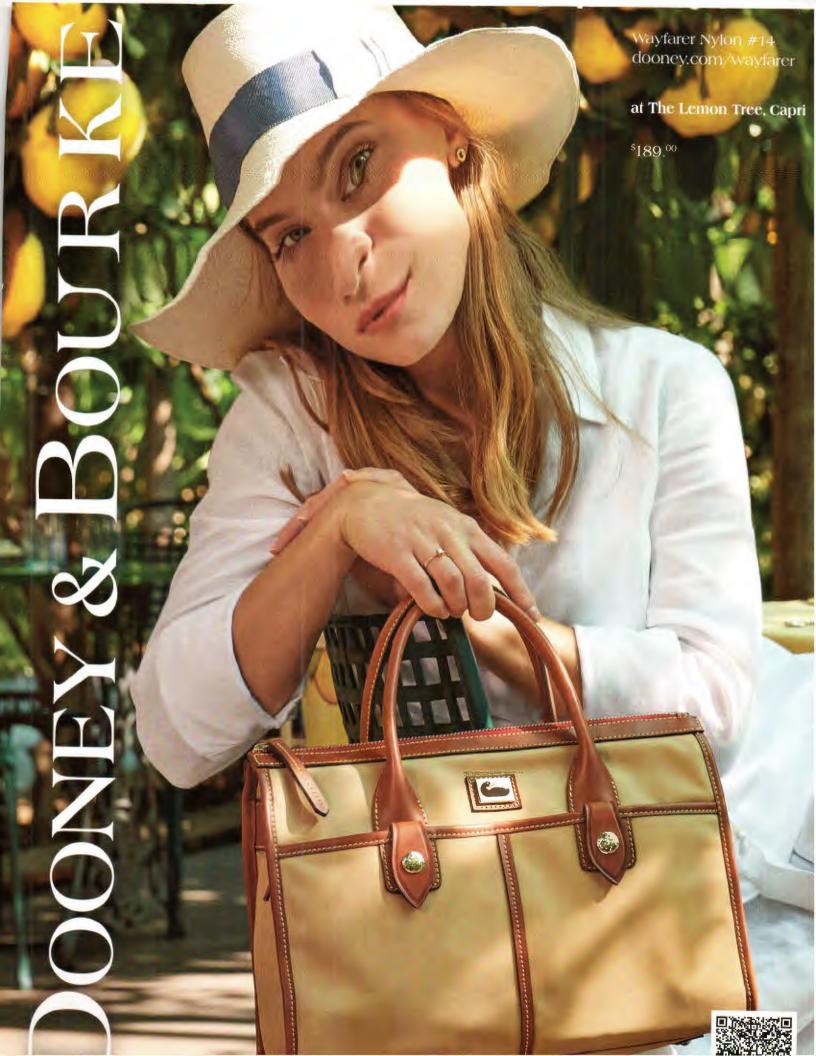
Love, Joan and Roy

Fourteen years ago, as I say. We didn't build the new house-we improved my kitchen and bought an old house together in New Orleans. No dog or llamas. A cat, yes, of course: Jimmy.

A ruddy turnstone is a bird, robin-sized and (in breeding season) calico-cat-colored. It bops along shorelines on its orange legs turning over rocks and shells with its beak, looking for what's good to a ruddy turnstone. It is born in frozen tundra. Three weeks later it flies thousands of miles, with no parental guidance, to warmer places around the world. To sight a pair of them is rare, I'm told, at a wedding, in Florida, in spring. A tribute, no doubt, to the bride. Who is still prettier than you can imagine.

The thing about Florida Man, he has no real sense of romance. Okay, "Kidnaps Scientist to Make His Dog Immortal" shows feeling. But "Drives Date to Sports Bar on Stolen Walmart Mobility Scooter"? Come on, bro. A sports bar? G

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